

**Exploring Community Building by Way of  
Community Construction in Contemporary China:  
A Case Study in City Z of Eastern China**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the**

**University of Liverpool**

**For the degree of Doctor in Philosophy**

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**March 2018**

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**Abstract**

The question of community has been robustly debated by Chinese scholars. I approach the topic by drawing from the community research in Western countries at the beginning of this thesis to interpret ‘community’ in China and further research is explored with regards to community construction. It is argued by this research that ‘community’ was similarly used by Chinese scholars as rural villages at the very beginning but it has also developed particularities in China’s particular context. By reviewing the socio-cultural and historical context of China’s society, ‘community’ in communist forms provides further details to understand the rise of community construction. As a response to the reform of the social welfare system, restructuring of urban administration and the demands of urbanisation, ‘community’ in China has been accommodated in urban and rural environments, both in pre-existing and newly-constructed ways. Those urban and rural environments become the background against which policies and practices contest and struggle with each other over influence on community construction. In particular, rural villages and communities that have been transformed by the implementation of community construction are the focus of this research.

This thesis qualitatively analyses the campaign of community construction currently being undertaken in China by the newly-constructed community PY in city Z in Shandong province, which is situated in Eastern China. Accordingly, fieldwork data has been collected from the case study area, mainly by documentary research, observation and semi-structured interviews, regarding the extraordinary experiences of communal life for residents during the past years, during and after community construction. By using the newly-constructed community as a key exemplar, the thesis comprises an attempt to contribute to the exploration of community building in the context of community construction. Put another way, community construction laid the foundation for an investigation of ‘community’ that lies in residents’ socioeconomic life in the old villages and the newly-constructed community.

In order to critically interrogate transformations brought about by community construction, this thesis mainly focuses on the specific lens of processing from rural to urban living. From interpersonal relations, during and after community construction, the influence of physical circumstances and issues with regard to traditions and culture, this thesis shows that a newly-constructed ‘community’ is accommodating pragmatically to community construction. Community building by way of community construction, the general conclusion is, the newly-constructed settlement by integrating villages is promising for the emergence of ‘community’, though some problematic aspects exist as well. The future of communities in Chinese society depends on whether the conflicts between the socioeconomic needs of residents, namely achievement of urban status and government’s political demands can be reconciled.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Karen Evans and Dr. Lynn Hancock. Thanks for the chance they gave me four years ago to do a PhD in University of Liverpool and because of this, I have experienced a different life in England and learnt more in a different academic environment. More importantly, without their guidance and support throughout the research process my research would not have been possible to reach this far. There is an old adage in China: He/she who is a teacher for a day is the father/mother for a lifetime. I will treasure these great experiences as well as the good qualities that I learned from them for life.

Thanks to my colleagues in the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology: Jonathan, my friend, thank you for helping me to improve my English writings. I also want to say thanks to my colleagues, Maiké, Will, Katie and Aidan, thanks for your help during my study and life in England.

I also would like to say thank you to the lecturers who did my IAP (independent assessment panel) every year, stressful but helpful. Additionally, it is a good way to know the difference of educational system between China and UK from the procedures that ensure me to keep my pace for PhD study.

I have always received support and love from my parents and my big brother. It is their support that makes me persist to the end. My girlfriend makes me believe that I have no regrets at the end of my PhD journey, thank you and love you.

I am grateful to my motherland - China and especially that my research is funded by Chinese scholarship council, thanks for the long term support for my research in Liverpool. I would also say thanks to the people who offered help during my fieldwork and the participants who participated in the interviews, though I cannot give their names here.

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introductory chapter**

### **Introduction**

This is a qualitative study, exploring community building by way of community construction in contemporary China. In this introductory chapter, there will firstly be a brief introduction about how the research was established step by step. Then the research objectives and questions will be provided. This will be followed by an outline of the thesis.

‘Community’ is long established as an area for researching social structure and social transformations. During the last few decades in China there did not appear to be a clash between its usage in China’s context and Western culture. However, since Chinese researchers resorted to Western concepts of community to investigate China’s society, a review of community in Western academic environments was necessary for this research. By comparison of its historical form, rural villages and community in China are found to have much in common with the classical explanations of community in Western developed civilisations. Even so, ‘community’ should be reconsidered carefully in the Chinese circumstances: ‘community’ in the Western explanations did not fit the situation in communist China (from 1949). Linking to the systems of communes and work units that were established prior to the era of ‘Open and Reform’ (before 1978), land and household registration policies which were closely related to people’s livelihood and social welfare have been critical when analysing issues of community and community construction alike.

The campaign of community construction in China has occurred within the reform context and since it was selected in the official political documents in the era of reform (1983<sup>1</sup>, 1986<sup>2</sup>, 1999<sup>3</sup>, 2000<sup>4</sup>), the concept of community has been of particular importance. From the demand for the reform of social welfare systems, the restructuring of urban administration and demands of urbanisation (especially city

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<sup>1</sup> The eighth national conference of Ministry of Civil Affairs (第八次全国民政会议), April, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Civil Affairs document, 1986.

<sup>3</sup> Document on national community construction experiment (全国社区建设试验区工作方案), Ministry of Civil Affairs, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ opinions on promoting the construction of urban community in the whole country (民政部关于在全国推进城市社区建设的意见), November, 2000.

and town-risation: *chengzhenhua* 城镇化, which will be explained and explored later in Chapter Three), the ideas of community have proved central to the ambitions of successive governments to emphasise community construction.

Transformation from rural villages to urban settlements is the latest manifestations of community construction, which is also the research focus of this thesis. Mass migrations of people moved from rural areas to urban areas resulting from vast community construction projects nationwide. The array of projects and policies of community construction have aimed to construct ‘community’ as both an antidote to conflicts generated by the reform and a path to integrate urban and rural development. The role of antidote assumes that communities have inherent capacities to mediate social problems generated by social transformations, while the path of community construction prioritises the role of community in urbanisation and the inclusion of residents who still maintain their communal lives.

As such, attention is given first to the historical shifts and continuities of lives in both practices of community construction and experiences of residents, which has been directly intervened by political power. The analysis drawn upon qualitative research with a newly-constructed community (PY, in City Z of Eastern China) by way of community construction to explore the resonance of community to the lives of residents and to their experiences of community construction. Data was collected from documentary research, observations and semi-structured interviews, regarding the experiences of residents’ communal lives both in the old villages and the new settlement.

The data was analysed using grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Findings were generated in the following aspects: (i) induced by land expropriation, community construction has driven changes in interpersonal relations in formal, informal and familial ways; however, residents were not passive recipients - for example, new situations were found in their family lives in the new settlement. In addition, the primary ties which connected residents in the old villages were also found to be important for residents’ reconnections in the new settlement; (ii) from the reconnections, residents have demonstrated a willingness to adapt to the newly-constructed community impacted by a new physical circumstance. In particular, from place attachment, it is argued that local roots were essential to the membership and

attachment to the newly-constructed 'community'. In private spaces, neighbourhood relations have developed by residents due to the transformed families. In public spaces, adaptation of residents to the new settlement was presented by their communal activities; (iii) residents' commitment to the new communal lives was also reflected by the practices surrounding culture and traditions, such as rural religions, clans and weddings, which have been readjusted by residents to serve to the sustention of the contemporary basis of 'community'. Accordingly, the social meaning of these cultural events and rituals has also been changed. 'Community' features in residents' lives which often provide for exclusionary experiences in the newly-constructed community, for example, in residents' relations with 'outsiders'. Additionally, in analysing most transformations that resulted from community construction, age and gender were the two main factors that constantly impacted residents' experiences and feelings.

For residents, to some extent, the role of governments and cadres in issues of land and community construction caused dissatisfaction with the newly-constructed community and undermined the effect of community building. Additionally, the government's policy-orientation of urban settlements in community construction was to act as a director and did not adequately account for the complex and transitional nature of residents' experiences of communal life - especially as residents struggle to be urban citizens in the new settlement. However, in addition to the residents' criticisms, the endeavours of cadres and governments cannot be denied in community construction. To some extent, grassroots organisations led by cadres have the potential to improve the quality of life for residents from community service and community management.

In summary, demands brought about by reform over the past decades, along with rapid urbanisation has led to a sudden concern about questions of community and its social values. This has been made more significant in the context of community construction due to the dramatic social transformations brought about by it. Under these circumstances, there is a necessity to reappraise community in China's context that a large scale of 'communities' are constructed by community construction. This thesis describes and explains the situation of community building by way of community construction in contemporary China, and comprises a critical

exploration of the resonance of community to policies of community construction and to the lives of residents. Overall, community construction is more than just renovating villages, but aims to create a new lifestyle and ways of being in the newly-constructed community, from rural to urban.

## **The research objectives and questions**

### *Research objectives*

The Chinese government put forward that newly-constructed communities should retain the essence of existing community<sup>5</sup>. Some scholars assumed that community construction can generate optimistic outcomes (Miu & Jian, 2007), and community was believed to be built by community construction through a natural process. By contrast, a loss of faith in community construction as a result of forced relocation and integration (Li *et al.*, 2014) also exists. However, this study aims not to reveal the social change of the whole nation brought about by community construction, but to focus on what can be learned from a single case. To make the best use of this case, just as argued by Mechanic (1989), it is worthwhile to use a case study to contribute to the construction of social theory. As such, my research aims to describe the generality and particulars of the newly-constructed community selected for this research and to make readers aware of the situation of communities in community construction. Overall, the key point of this thesis is to understand residents' experiences and feelings after their relocation to the newly-constructed settlement, and to assess whether the new settlement has been formed as a 'community' and in what ways.

### *Research questions*

The research questions are statements that identify the research phenomenon (Backman & Kyngas, 1999, p.149). In addition, questions are formulated so that they give the researcher the flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The examination of community construction needs to return to the nature of community as its starting point. As such, residents and their perspectives, feelings and experiences of community construction, as well

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.chinanews.com/11/2016/02-02/7745328.shtml> 'keep the nostalgia of the old villages' - President Xi Jinping's expression of the direction of village development, 2015.

as comprehensive communal lives in the new settlement, served as the focus of this study. In order to explore the resonance of community to community construction and to the lives of residents, empirical work conducted for this study served the concerns above and addressed the following questions:

1. To explore the basis of the new ‘community’ from the angles of social networks and social cohesion;
2. To explore the role of community construction and the factors that made residents move to a new settlement;
3. To explore the situation of traditions and rituals and the roles they play in the construction of the newly-constructed community;
4. To explore the expectations residents have of the community construction they have experienced.

The research questions have been answered in various parts of this thesis, mainly by Chapter Five (interpersonal relations during community construction), Chapter Six (physical circumstances and the reconnections of residents), Chapter Seven (traditional elements and cultural events) and Chapter Eight (the conclusions).

### **Outline of chapters**

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter One is the introductory chapter, which comprises an introduction to this research, research questions and objectives and the outline of chapters. The concept of community and its relation to policy and practice in China is considered in chapters two and three. In Chapter Two, this thesis reviews the interpretations of ‘community’ in the Western academic environment. The origins of China’s community and differences of community research between Western society and China are also highlighted. It is argued that Chinese rural villages are more likely to conform to the classical explanations of ‘community’ in the Western society. The main argument of this chapter is that, though community in China carries the historical imprint, Chinese community has developed its own characteristics and practices. These characteristics have a lot to do with China’s political history, as community was in communist forms for about 30 years. Moreover, community in the context of transformation is closely interwoven with two systems particular to China: land and household registration. Overall,

‘community’ with Chinese characteristics indicates important aspects that are critical to the investigation of community construction in China.

In Chapter Two, when tracing community back to its historical forms, especially from early modern China, it can be argued that community was not a peripheral phenomenon but one of the issues central to Chinese community construction. The general background upon which the discussion is drawn will be described in Chapter Three and it further explains how the campaign of community construction has been promoted. First of all, it questions the extent to which community construction has created an irreplaceable need that only community can shoulder from three aspects: reform of social welfare system, restructuring urban administration and demand of urbanisation. Community construction is argued by this research to be the focal point in dealing with social issues generated by reform and promoting urbanisation/city and town-risation from 1980s onwards. After explaining the necessity of community construction in China, the definition of community construction is clearly outlined. At the meantime, the research focus of this research is also highlighted in the context of community construction - transforming rural villages into urban settlements. Then the campaign of community construction and exchanges between concepts and practices, as well as the implications of relevant policies are discussed by looking at existing research into community construction.

Chapter Four is the methodological chapter, which provides in-depth details about how and where the research was conducted. Case study was identified as an appropriate research method to explore community and community construction in China. At the same time, this chapter gives a full account of the fieldwork, which was carried out in a newly-constructed community by way of community construction in Shandong province in Eastern China. During the fieldwork, data was collected using several methods: documentary research, observations and semi-structured interviews. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyse the data collected for this research. However, carrying out fieldwork in China, especially on a topic of community construction, which involved sensitive issues, such as land and relocation, was a difficult matter. The problems encountered and how they were resolved are discussed including ethical considerations, negotiating

access and the undertaking of fieldwork requiring the support of the local community. The data analysis process is also presented in this chapter.

Chapters five to eight discuss the empirical findings from the study, which drawn on data from historical documents and fieldwork collected in the case-study area. Chapter Five presents the analysis with respect to the exploration of community as interpersonal social networks, which focuses on the relocation from rural villages to the newly-constructed community. Land expropriation in the case-study area is introduced at the beginning as it was where community construction started. The discussion of interpersonal relations in this chapter is divided into three categories: (i) disrupted informal relations in the process of community construction, which comprises residents' informal alliances, a brief summary of distanced living conditions and utilitarian marriage and their influences; (ii) the reliance and oscillation of formal relations is mainly explained by two aspects: cadres' role in community construction and generalised reciprocity linking with formal relations; (iii) influenced by informal and formal relations, familial relations are investigated mainly through the relations within families, such as the role of family members, labour and new situations in families. This chapter argues that the transformations are inseparable from the context of community construction: on one side, the change of interpersonal relations reflects that the fabric of the social system in the old villages has been both inherited and transformed; on the other side, the continuity of primary ties can be identified through the current situation, which is channelled through residents' reconnections in the new physical circumstances.

In line with the arguments in Chapter Five, residents' interpersonal relations have been transformed is not the complete story. It is through the reconnections of residents that social relations have been inserted into the newly-constructed community. Analysis in Chapter Six aims to explain residents' reconnections in the new settlement, which has been influenced by the new physical environment. Firstly, for residents, the continuity of old links and local roots were important in the formation of place attachment and the potential community attachment. Secondly, new neighbourhood relationships and communal activities have been developed by residents in the new physical circumstances, which have presented that new communal lives were originated in the past but also a reinvention of the past.



Specifically, neighbourhood relations have changed with the transformation of families as social units in private spaces: new interactions have transcended the limitation of geographical distances. Community activities showed residents' newly-developed interactions in the new public environments, especially from those new and spontaneous activities. Overall, given that urban environments have increasingly come to characterise residents' new living, it can be reflected by residents' communal experiences that to some extent, the new spaces are sustainable in the communal lives of residents. In addition, in the new settlement, primary ties inherited from the old villages by residents reasserted their position, which is mainly reflected by elders' role in communal lives.

The movement from rural villages towards the new and urban settings also provided the context within which Chapter Seven explores the particular resonance of community with respect to issues of culture and traditions. Chapter Seven continues the discussion by illustrating how culture and traditions were reoriented by residents to the contemporary settlement. Firstly, this chapter charts the important changes and development of religious practices reflected by residents' activities surrounding rural religions. In the new settlement, to some extent, cultural identification was formed by the revitalisation of religious practices. However, a trend of secularisation was also found in residents' performances surrounding rural religions, which was clearly seen in issues relating with relocating tombs. Secondly, the changed social beliefs in religions have elicited remarkable responses to clan and its values in ritualised life. In the new settlement, links within clan are becoming loose, which is characterised by diminished obligations of clan members. Thirdly, it is argued that clans were a central influence in residents' ritualised life in the old villages, for example in weddings, but this has changed. Consequently, from social capital and social support, the traditional values of the ritualised life have also changed. Overall, the meanings of culture and traditions are obtained from practices surrounding ritualised life and in turn, reflect upon themselves.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter of the thesis. It concludes that community construction which is promoted by the Chinese government is actually a Chinese way of community development. With respect to meaning of community construction, it is argued that community does have a resonance within the lives of

residents in the newly-constructed community. However, it is also clear that for residents, the experience of community is complex and as such is unlikely to assert consistent feelings. This is clear seen in the problematic aspects in community building, such as residents' livelihood/employment in the new settlement, the struggle between 'urban status' and traditional lifestyles. In addition, the constructions of community, evident in the expectations of government and its commitment to the new community are likely to engender negative responses to community by residents. The current urbanisation policy may serve to intensify damaging outcomes for both residents and the newly-constructed community if the urban status of residents cannot be achieved. It also discusses the limitations of the current research and the future prospects of research in this area of study.

## Chapter Two

### Community and its usage in modern China

#### Introduction

A clear definition of ‘community’ was officially given by the Chinese central government in 2000 as ‘a social collective entity constituted by people living within a defined geographical district’<sup>6</sup> and the scope of community in urban areas generally equates to areas under the jurisdiction of Residents’ Committees (*juminweiyuanhui* 居民委员会). In contrast to the idea that community was inherited from the early ideas of society and opposed to the organised realm of the state (Williams, 1976, p.75), community in China ‘implies the management, control and manipulation of local people by higher-level of state bodies’ (Ferris, 1958, p.159; cited in Crow & Allan, 1994, p.15). The Chinese government has therefore defined community with clear boundaries in an attempt to create bureaucratic units around the country.

However, China is a country of complexity in socio-economic conditions and there are great differences in social, political, economic and cultural characteristics in different regions. Furthermore, in the historical process of Chinese urbanisation, various relevant policies and urbanisation practices have increased the difficulty of providing a consistent definition of community. Thus, it is impractical to use a single definition of community to reflect the integrity of Chinese society, which is comprised of thousands of communities. In addition, to explore the origins of community and its development in China, it is necessary to respond to the profound changes of ‘community’ inherent in Chinese society, both from rural and urban perspectives.

In China, ‘community’ is a sociological concept imported by Chinese scholars from Western societies in 1930s. Even though the linguistic difference of ‘community’ between English and Chinese does not hinder communications between Chinese and academics from elsewhere, community research in China is problematic due to the weak basis of sociology in that country. There is a pre-set hypothesis

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<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ opinions on promoting the construction of urban community in the whole country 民政部关于在全国推进城市社区建设的意见 . <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40746/3491444.html>, Zhongbanfa, 23<sup>rd</sup> document, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2000.

employed by some Chinese scholars when conducting community research that 'community' is a settled term that has already been clearly defined (Wang, 1989, pp.28-29). A misleading result of this is that Western classical community theories are directly cited and generally used blindly to understand and explain specific situations of community and society in China. However, because of the unique historical conditions in China, Western community theories cannot achieve seamless connection with community and its development in China. Under these circumstances, it is important to examine Western interpretations of community to understand what is relevant to China. This chapter identifies a range of themes relating to community which will be investigated in greater detail in the course of this study. Initially, it will outline the definitions of community in Western countries and the internalisation of the concept in China by Chinese scholars prior to exploring the appeal it is likely to present for the purpose of community construction.

## **2.1 A review of Western community research**

### **2.1.1 Community: from 'community' to industrial bureaucratic society**

Defining community cannot bypass the classic comparison of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* by Tönnies, who argued that community was an expression of social relations. Tönnies explained the basic distinction between 'natural will' and 'rational will', and if social relationships were governed mainly by 'natural will' that 'the relationship itself, and also the resulting association, is conceived of either as real and organic life - this is the essential characteristic of the *Gemeinschaft* (community)' (1963, p.121). As argued by Tönnies, community was the foundation of social integration and it was used to express traditional face-to-face relations of a non-contractual nature (Delanty, 2003, p.12). In terms of historical trends, Tönnies suggested that *Gemeinschaft* (community) would be replaced by the more rational *Gesellschaft* (society) (Tönnies, 1963, p.192).

Durkheim had a different view to Tönnies, suggesting that community was organic and society was mechanical. As argued by Durkheim (1957), social life was analysed by focusing on social solidarity, which was categorised into two types - 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity'. According to Gusfield (1975, p.7), mechanical solidarity was 'the result of similarity of traditions, beliefs and activities',

and that by which community was characterised. In contrast, society was characterised more by organic solidarity (Simmel, 1950). To reiterate, organic solidarity characterised modern cities 'where the social mass is contracted more strongly than elsewhere' (Durkheim, 1933, p.258).

The concept of community from a vague consensus relating to social relations was developed by researchers following Durkheim to a clearer analytical framework, which contains structural and cultural dimensions that contribute much to community research (Brint, 2001). Specifically, community research in America was presented with comparisons between urban life and the traditional ways of life represented by the Chicago School (Tan, 2009, p.119). Community as defined by the Chicago School references both the physical community and the ecological processes that are mediated by culture. 'The main point is that the community is so conceived at once as a territorial and a functional unit' (Park, 1952, p.241) and that competition in society take the form of conflict (Park, 1952, p.152). The continuously developed community has well-defined areas that 'each having its own peculiar selective and cultural characteristics' (McKenzie, 1967, p.77).

Different types of associations were reflected by the characteristics of more or less urban or rural environments where 'we should not expect to find abrupt and discontinuous variation between urban and rural types of personality. The city and the country may be regarded as two poles in reference to one or the other of which all human settlements tend to arrange themselves' (Wirth, 1938, p.3). In terms of community, primary ties persist, but in a weaker and more instrumental way in urban settings (Wirth, 1938, p.12). Differences of life in urban and countryside regions were also identified by Williams (1973, p.1): life in the countryside is natural, peaceful and innocent, while in cities, life is about learning and communication, and thus more comprehensive. Similarly, the difference between life in urban and rural regions is that 'life in the countryside is viewed as one of harmony and virtue. The town is disorganised; the countryside is settled. The town is bad; the countryside is good' (Newby, 1977, p.12). Overall, the differences between rural or urban lifestyles were shaped by the degree of the rural-urban continuum (Wirth, 1964, p.224), which was also supported by Turner (1969, p.96).

By the above reviews, lifestyle was viewed as just one of many factors in urban studies, which means that ways of life may have certain effects on patterns of social relations. However, for Dewey it seemed unnecessary to research the subject intensively and specially, because 'there is no such thing as urban culture or rural culture, but only various culture contents somewhere on the rural-urban continuum' (Dewey, 1960, p.65). Insofar as a continuum of space and time exists between rural and urban life, it is possible that the 'folk' way of life and 'urban' way of life could spread and interweave with each other. The influences of urban and rural differences are 'real, but relatively unimportant' (Dewey, 1960, p.66).

The development of an industrial bureaucratic society brought about more debate on community and its existence in urban and rural areas. Modern capitalism was important in urban social structures, as argued by Weber (1958, p.102). Even if there were many similarities between the East and West in the Medieval Ages, it was only in the West that cities became the base of social associations, owing largely to the development of capitalism. Under rationalised conditions in a modern capitalist society, Weber believed that modernity could not provide many possibilities for the emergence of community. As a result, the outlook of spiritual life in modern ages would not be optimistic. As such, when discussing 'community' in a society with a highly differentiated and technological social structure caused by the dynamic density of populations (Milgram, 1974), the core issue should be how to maintain social orders and the integration of social members as 'the expansion of populations...moral order becomes for the first time a genuine problem' (Kluchhohn, 1960, p.78).

Specific variables were used by Wirth (1938) to argue that the patterns of human association could be explained by three parameters - effects of size, density and heterogeneity. Simmel analysed the social effects of size in that 'the larger the group, the more impersonal group interaction becomes' (cited in Saunders, 1986, p.91). In terms of social structure, in the context of an increase in population size, alienation was argued to be unavoidable in modern life (Simmel, 1950; Mellor, 1977, p.185), and 'the price of the objective perfection of the world will be the atrophy of the human soul' (Coser, 1965, p.23). In addition, the liberating effect of urban life has been argued by Simmel (1908, p.121) and Park (1925b, p.65) that traditional

community was liberated from the constraints of time and space (Hiltz & Turoff, 1993), and to some extent, community without propinquity was possible (Webber, 1964). According to this line of reasoning, there was 'never a genuine community' (Weber, 1958; Blake, 1990, p.177).

Overall, Tönnies calls for the recovery of Gemeinschaft-style life on the basis of communal ties (Durkheim, 1933; Simmel, 1908). Urban styles of community were found by Durkheim (1933) in modern industrial society. While in the Chicago School, fully presented by Wirth (1938), community was explained by social life with geographical constraints; it may reflect the close and direct social relationships of Tönnies, or may have nothing to do with it. Along with the development of an industrial society and urbanisation, the impact of the development of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution on community was clearly seen as well. The key point is that by reviewing interpretations of community, from Tönnies to the arguments in the context of an industrial bureaucratic society, sociologists in community research and urban studies were clearly aware that a way of life was being formed.

#### 2.1.2 Community: social networks and social capital

In line with the arguments above, the point that the future for community and community life was not optimistic was challenged intensively until the 1960s. One of the profound points of view was to redefine the essence of community as social networks, by which community is no longer limited to a certain social groups within regional categories. In particular, debates were triggered by over territorial factors, which had previously been the most important factor in social relations (Wellman & Leighton, 1979, p.364), and the starting point of community research was to explore the structure of personal social networks directly, rather than space or place. For example, Fischer (1975) opposed the 'settlement pattern', wherein local structure could decide the qualities of community and individuals, because the 'place' was not a decisive factor of the social system, although the local structure of a place could show a system of changes. As a result, Fischer asserted that 'community' should be defined by the nature of social relations, rather than geographical regions, which provided social resources and support for people's daily life (1975, pp.1330-1334).

The perspective of social networks largely freed the study of community from spatial and normative bases (Wellman & Leighton, 1979, p.367). In other words, community was not necessarily linked to a particular set of social relations but was developed through the analysis of social life. From the 1970s to 1980s, there appeared a large body of empirical research into the density of personal relationships and acquaintanceships within communities (Freudenburg, 1986; Granovetter, 1973; Wellman, 1979). As a consequence, personal ties and primary groups were found flourishing in cities (Gans, 1962a; Young & Willmott, 1957), and ‘the variables of number, density and heterogeneity...are not crucial determinants of social life or personality’ (Lewis, 1965, p.497). From this, there was little evidence to confirm urban alienation and anomie (Gulick, 1973; Fischer, 1984; Wellman, 1973).

Community has been methodologically associated with network analytic techniques (Kadushin, 1966; Walker, 1977; Wellman, 1979). Scholars tried to use empirical methods to explore community by measuring the density of social relations and conceptualising community was often indicated by the quality or the quantity of neighbours (Hillery, 1955). With regard to community, neighbourhood has been considered a counterpart rather than a contradictory subject of community. Community has been firmly rooted in neighbourhood, as seen in the symbiotic communities of Park (1936), the ‘street corners’ of Liebow (1967) and ‘street corner society’ (Whyte, 1955). To identify neighbourhoods as containers for communal ties admitted the organising functions of spaces (Wellman & Leighton, 1979, pp.365-367), for example, neighbourhood indicated a limited space, no further than the street, block or apartment building (Bulmer, 1987; Willmott, 1986).

Neighbourhood relations were found in interpersonal relations even in urban environments, though only a small proportion of social ties were in the same neighbourhood (Wellman, 1979). In addition, neighbourhood relations have been regarded by researchers as a panacea for a society with more industrial and bureaucratic characteristics (Sampson, 2004, pp.165-166; Johnston *et al.* 2005). The argument that community can protect individuals against bureaucratic claims (Ratcliffe, 1978) could be meaningful, especially when residents face issues of dramatic relocation relating to political power. Additionally, community, mainly neighbourhood relations, could be useful to renovate old areas (Powell, 1972),



because new families' structures were responsible for the relations of neighbourhood and peers (Sennett, 1970; Lasch, 1995) and fostering networks would heal the pressure of physical change and diversity of populations (Hirsch, 1980; Caplan & Killilea, 1976).

Overall, local community and neighbourhood relations were still valued by urbanites as sources of sociability and support (see the reviews by Keller, 1968; Wellman & Whitaker, 1974; Warren & Warren, 1976; Warren, 1963). Neighbourhood relations were believed to have persisted and were regarded as a component of primary social networks. However, as argued above, in terms of community in Western societies with more industrial and bureaucratic characteristics, individuals become more dependent on formal organisations rather than informal links, for example, neighbours (Stein, 1960; Nisbet, 1962; Gusfield, 1975; Castells, 1976; Mellor, 1977).

From the above, research into community has evolved into the analysis of social networks, and consequently has developed by researchers into the theory of 'social capital' in civil society theory (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000; Field, 2003). To reiterate, research into social networks is an important step to further research of social capital (Fukuyama, 1999) and the social relations within community become significant aspects of civil society. As such, community research, with the promotion of citizens' participation in community life, goes far beyond the analysis of general social functions of the community in urban sociology. Here, 'community' becomes the field which reflects citizens' political qualities, and 'community participation' becomes the basis of civilisation. Ideally, it is argued that a sense of community can help to support political activity (Parry, 1987, p.229).

From the perspective of policy, community has had a major effect on public policy in recent decades (Willmott, 1989). The social interactions of neighbours are argued important in encouraging civic behaviours (Johnston *et al.* 2005) due to that solidarity between community members is the basis for them to come together to promote or defend their interests. Thus, the interactions of community members have become valuable in analysing community problems. When 'social capital' shows up as a variety of meaningful views and act (Buck, 2001, pp.2254-2256), it is believed that the denser people's social relations are, the more likely the citizens of the

community are to accept mutual beneficial norms, which can result in social trust (Putnam, 1995. pp.65-78).

### 2.1.3 Community: from the consideration of construction

Possibilities for community are also supported by theories of symbolic constructions and structural functionalism. As argued by Cohen, the symbolisation of a community was something that community members used to distinguish themselves from others, and community was perceived as ‘cluster of symbolic and ideological map references with which the individual is socially oriented’ (Cohen, 1985, p.57). The point argued by Cohen, that community was based on the symbolic constructions of boundaries, can to some extent reflect the mobility of community as researched by Delanty (2003, p.30): modernity not only invents new traditions, but also rests on ‘traditions inherited from the past’, through which a kind of possibility for the mobility of traditions from one era to the next is identified. Thus, social networks could be mobilised, and where they do not exist they could be constructed by urbanites (Cox, 1966; Burt, 1976). In addition, the mobility of social networks makes the city become a network of networks (Craven & Wellman, 1973). In this sense, community and society become forms of sociability and community is possible in modern society.

Similarly, Parsons described community life from the perspective of structural functionalism stating: ‘a community is that collectivity the members of which share a common territorial area as that base of operations for daily activities’ (Parsons, 1951, p.91; cited in Delanty, 2003, p.36). More evidence for the promise of community comes in the form of communitarianism. Developed in the 1990s, communitarians admit that a web of relations and a shared culture are necessary for community; more importantly, communitarianism emphasises that a community (not a utopian one) should be more responsive rather than fully responsive to the true needs of its members<sup>7</sup> (Etzioni, 1995, pp.1-5), though a community could be exclusive to non-members.

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<sup>7</sup> Peoples’ socialisation and social control are mainly used to enhance communities’ responsiveness, which aims to reduce the contradiction between the society’s need for order and individual’s request for autonomy.

In summary, community has a number of interpretations (St Leger & Gillespie, 1991; Scherer, 1972). Community can be summarised by integrating most definitions (for example, members of community commonly have interpersonal networks; residence in a common territory; solidarity activities, *etc.*) (Hillery, 1955). A unified and widely recognised criterion, however, cannot be established to define community (see Crow & Allan, 1995, pp.147-166), and ‘there has never been a theory of community, nor even a satisfactory definition’, of all the definitions, the one common element in them all is humanity (Bell & Newby, 1974, p.15).

Even so, reviews of community are not only helpful in gaining further understanding of the development of communities, but also serve as stark reminders that community is a concept that is neither self-evident nor incontestable. Community constitutes ‘the most fundamental and far reaching of sociology’s unit-ideas’ (Nisbet, 1966, p.47). The review above do not seek to provide a comprehensive overview of the many and various definitional approaches to community, but rather highlights key themes which help to understand the developments of ‘community’, and on the basis of which, it is helpful to understand the situation of community under China’s particular conditions. The next subsection will elaborate on the situation of community and its origins in China’s history.

## **2.2 The acknowledgement of community in early modern China and pre-reform era**

At the beginning of its usage in China, ‘community’ as a foreign word was imported and translated by Chinese sociological scholars. Specifically, ‘community’ as a sociological concept was first introduced to China as early as 1933 (Gao & Wang, 2009). Some students majoring in sociology of Yanjing University encountered difficulties when translating one sentence in Robert Park’s (1864-1944) work: ‘community is not society’. Referred to by the classical concepts of ‘Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft’ (community and society) by Tönnies (1963), these terms were not uniformly translated in the early work of Chinese sociologists. Wu (1935) translated these terms as ‘natural society and artificial society’. Contrastingly, Fei’s translation was associated with, on one hand, a society ruled by rituals, and on the other, a society ruled by law (1947).

Ultimately, community was translated commonly as *shequ* (社区) which combines two Chinese words, and society was translated as *shehui* (社会). Initially, in ancient times, *she* (社) was regarded as the god of land or a location in which worship was offered to this god. In addition, the ancient usage of the term *she* referred to rituals of sacrifice while, in modern times, *she* has often been conceptualised by groups or organisations, for example, *bao she* (报社 newspaper offices). *Qu* (区) in Chinese can be interpreted as meaning area or zone. Overall, the Chinese translation connotes ethnic groups as well as geographical, traditional, and cultural meaning.

Once introduced to China, community research became the main methodology used to combine sociology with China's social realities. China's early community research was influenced by Bronislaw Malinowski and his field ethnography, British anthropology functionalism, combined with Robert Park and other studies of urban sociology of the Chicago School. Mostly, community studies were small-scale field surveys in a territory conducted by a minority of intellectuals. The most prominent feature at the early stage of community research was shown through 'tangible villages' to know 'the intangible China' (Liu, 2012). In other words, community research started with a micro community to research macro society, and community was used as a specific term to explain people's actual and observable life. As Malinowski says, 'by getting familiar with small village life, as if we can see a microcosm of the whole of China under the microscope' (see the preamble of 'Jiangcun Economy', Fei, 2007). Some examples of early indigenous community research can also be listed<sup>8</sup>, it is clear that the scholars equated rural villages to communities.

### 2.2.1 Villages as counterparts of communities - the foundations of Chinese society

The deep-rooted rural structure which follows the system of the Qin dynasty has spread over thousands of years (Zhu, 2005, p.68). Chinese society was fundamentally rural and the basic units of Chinese rural society were villages (Fei, 1947, p.1). Traditional, small-scale and self-sufficient peasant economies and clan

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<sup>8</sup> Jiangcun Economy: Chinese Peasant Life (Fei, 1938); Golden Wing: A Sociological Study of Chinese Family System (Lin, 1936); The Handicraft Industry in Yicun (Zhang, 1944).

communities (*zongzugongtongti* 宗族共同体)<sup>9</sup> were the two main features of this rural society, as well as villages. Four factors were used to define a village<sup>10</sup> (see Fei, 1947, pp.2-3), from which potential features of community can be inferred.

The economy of rural society was the traditional, small-scale and self-sufficient peasant economy (see Song, 2005, pp.85-87). Except for special commodities such as iron or salt, every family could achieve self-sufficiency. Economic interactions and exchange were unnecessary. To some extent, family in China can be seen as an independent economic unit. This, however, does not exclude special situations: for example, if the family enterprise is big enough, it then spreads out of the scope of a single family and expands to the lineage level, which means that the original family enterprise becomes the business of the whole *jiazu*<sup>11</sup>. In turn, in this situation, the lineage structure is necessary to support the expanded business. In Chinese culture, members of a clan could gain trust more easily than those outside of it. In this instance, this bidirectional structure means that the *jiazu* is supportive of individuals, and individuals must make sacrifice for a *jiazu*.

In addition, China's villages have the geographical implication that 'people are living together in a particular place' (Lee & Newby, 1983, p.57). Villages were defined with a clear boundary that implies almost no mobility of people. Solitude and isolation were the normal situation among villages, attributed to the relatively closed environment (see Fei, 1947, p.2) and 'life in rural society is very parochial' (Fei, 1947; Hamilton, 1992, p.41). Generally, social relations were governed by a differential mode of association (*Chaxugeju* 差序格局), in which interpersonal relationships were mediated by '*renqing*' 人情 (Fei, 1947, p.46): a kind of (*guanxi* 关系) relations behind the gifts or favours.

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<sup>9</sup> *Zongzugongtongti*, in Chinese, *zongzu* 宗族 means an 'expanded family' in which the members have the same ancestor, they have the same surname and often have blood ties (A village could either have a minimum of several families or include up to several thousand). *Gongtong* 共同 means to have something in common or groups have similarity. *Ti* 体 means body, or can be inferred as an organisational form. Generally, several small families constitute one big 'family' - clan; a clan is called one *jiazu* 家族, also as '*zongzugongtongti*'. *Jiazu* or *zongzu*, sometimes can be used interchangeably. Strictly speaking, the circle of *zongzu* is broader than *jiazu*.

<sup>10</sup> (1) Small peasant economy, residence not far away from the farmland. This means apparent agricultural features; (2) Cooperation with each other, mutual help; (3) Living together in a same territory; (4) Land inherited from generation to generation.

<sup>11</sup> See explanations in *zongzugongtongti*.

Villagers restricted their activities to an isolated social circle, and within that circle, familiarity between members was formed. Trust among individuals derived from this familiarity and laid the foundation for their daily interactions (Fei, 1947, p.3). This kind of trust by itself was traditionally referred to as *guiju* (规矩 ‘norms of the society’, in Fei, 1947, p.3) in China. Villagers can do whatever they want as long as they do not violate *guiju*. *Guiju* is not law; it more closely resembles ritual and custom. That is to say, traditions and rituals were more important than law in maintaining social order. Put another way, rural society in China was a society of ‘*lizhi*’ 礼治<sup>12</sup>, which means ‘rural society is ruled by rituals’ (Hamilton, 1992, p.107). Fei (1947, pp.40-42) used ‘ruled by elders’ (*zhanglaotongzhi* 长老统治) and ‘educational power’ (*jiaohuaquanli* 教化权力)<sup>13</sup> to stress the role of traditions (elders) and to explain this power structure (Hamilton, 1992, p.129); yet it seems more appropriate to describe the power structure in the scope of ‘*jiazu politics*’, because both the traditions and elders were firmly embedded in and limited by a bounded village and the relatively stable group within it.

As people shared the same cultural background reflected by rituals and traditions, their identities were formed, just as Cohen (1985, p.118) argued, as ‘the reality of community lies in its members’ perception of the vitality of its culture.’ As a result, *zongzugongtongti*, as a special form of organisation in China’s rural society with minimal population mobility, kept its influence on blood ties (*xueyuan* 血缘) and simultaneously gained more regional influence (*diyuan* 地缘). The rural villages of China were much more like the classic definitions of community by Tönnies (1963). They featured bounded territory, the members of which have face-to-face relationships, and the role of traditions indicated the shared basis of culture. Also as Durkheim (1933) argued, the similarity and familiarity constituted the basis of maintaining social order.

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<sup>12</sup> *Li* means the behavioral norms and rituals recognised by and complied with by the public. It is tradition that formed and maintained the norms of *Li*. As such, traditions, which are generally inherited from previous generations (‘the elders’), have been involved with the power structure of rural society.

<sup>13</sup> The power in Fei’s words is ‘paternalism’. On one side is the elders who have the educational power; accordingly, the other side is people who need to learn. The objects to learn are culture, which is mandatory to the new social members. Educational power was reflected by the learning process.

Western interpretations of community are valuable for community research in China due to the theoretical views and angles that constantly examine the direction and the value of community. One issue was raised by Maurice Freedman (1962) in his article '*A Chinese Phase in Social Anthropology*', which he pointed out that, considering that Chinese society is a civilised society with a long history, in such a complex society, community is not simply a microcosm of society. Edmund Leach (1982)<sup>14</sup> also doubted whether, in a vast country like China, the micro study of an individual community can summarise China's national conditions. However, a 'place community' with a clear regional boundary (Willmott, 1986, ch.6) is consistent with the situation of most China's villages in reality. In addition, just as Fei (2004, pp.23-25) suggested, he did not take the social system in community research that he described as the typical model cross the entire country and he believed that community study was just the beginning foundation to understand Chinese society.

#### 2.2.2 Socialist forms as counterparts of community

In 1949, China stepped into a new era and became a socialist country. Under the guidance of communism, the Communist Party of China conducted a series of urban and rural reform movements. In the 30 years from 1949 to the end of the 1970s, China's society was represented separately by two distinct systems in urban and rural areas. Rural areas were ruled by a system of communes. The system of communes (*hezuoshezhidu* 合作社制度) or cooperatives (*hezuoshe* 合作社 or *gongshe* 公社) were the main organisational form in rural areas from 1949-1970s. Since the government focused on developing collective economy in rural areas, the arrangement of cooperatives was almost compulsory. In the 'great leap forward' period (*Dayuejin* 大跃进, 1958-1960), the Communist Party of China promoted this form of community to the whole country, which was called the 'people's commune movement' (*renmingongshehuayundong* 人民公社化运动, Zheng, 2002, pp.103-104).

Communes were both organisations of production and grassroots organisations of government. Communes developed in urban and rural environments were divided into different types according to their functions, such as production

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<sup>14</sup> By focusing on the relationship between community and state, he debated the typical Chinese community research in the past in his book <Social Anthropology>.

communes, supply and marketing communes and clinical communes. In rural areas, commune mainly refers to the production commune and a single commune could include several villages. Generally, all individual activities were dominated by communes, from food and clothing to collective production. All kinds of production tools and resources in a commune belonged to the collectivity. Daily life also featured collectivism - people working together, and through earning work points, gaining grain rations (Li, 2002, p.29). Commune was the political, economic and social entity that everyone contained their activities within. Villagers had no freedom to decide whether or not to join the system because population migration was strictly controlled by the household registration system (*hukou dengji zhidu* 户口登记制度) (Christiansen, 1990, pp.78-91), where a line was artificially drawn between the urban and rural worlds.

Urban areas were governed by the system of work units (*danweizhi* 单位制). The Communist Party of China started its revolution from the rural areas and finally established the new China. This process was called ‘encircling the cities from the countryside’ (Du, 1987, p.79). After the revolution, the Communist Party of China shifted their work focus from rural areas to cities, where urban management was found to be difficult for official authorities. Thus, the Communist Party of China had to rely on its past experience - the old supply system in political organisations, military and public enterprises, and this was where work units originated (Li, 2002, p.28). In addition, in cities, government during this period was inclined to establish industrial bases (Shi & Pan, 2002, pp.287-294). The work units system that was based on enterprises and factories were developed as the main form of community in urban areas.

In fact, a work unit can be seen as an independent state sector. It was a new social organisation that combined production, exchange, distribution and people’s lives and social welfare together. From the perspective of geographical space, the boundaries of communities and work units overlapped. Members of work units interacted within a relatively closed space. The work units bore some of the social functions that would otherwise be shouldered by the city and state (Chai, 1996). The welfare system of work units provided services for the members from cradle to grave. In addition, working in a work unit was referred to as getting the ‘iron rice



bowl' (He, 1993, p.157) in that era, which means they will never lose their job once being a member of the work unit. In terms of social control, work units not only had various 'community' functions, they also played administrative roles as grassroots organisations.

In short, a work unit has social, political and economic functions that govern urban employees and their dependents by providing all kinds of public services, such as housing, education and health care. The system of work units can comprehensively reflect the organisational and institutional characteristics of this planned economy period of China (Li, 2002, p.27). According to Bray's (2006, p.536) data, at the beginning of the reform running from 1978 to 1992, the share of urban workers who belonged to work units at the beginning and the end of the period was over 95% and 90%, respectively. The data demonstrates that work units dominated urban social form in that era. The demand gradually appeared for reform was also on account of the inherent disadvantages of this special system, such as the limitation for the mobility of populations, state's heavy burden in provision of social welfare and its strong political characteristics, and consequently resulted in the new development of community.

### **2.3 Practical implications: community in China's reality**

As argued above, communities were maintained and limited by the specific conditions of Chinese society. When facing transformations, two systems: the land system and household registration could affect the maintenance of community and community lives. In this research, as well as in other community research in China, it is necessary to understand the situation of communities from these two nationwide policies relating to transformations of community (community construction).

Firstly, in the land system in China, there is no private land. The land is divided into two parts: state-owned land in urban areas and collective-owned land in rural areas. The collective-owned land cannot be sold, transferred or leased for non-agricultural construction by 'Land Management Law' (2005). However, 'Land Management Law' article 2 stipulates that 'for the needs of national public interest, the government can legally expropriate land and give compensation'. Under this circumstance, the criterion of public interest is determined by the government. In

fact, the government is the only body that has the power to define the issue of land, with local governments being the only buyers and sellers in the land market. Simply, farmers' land, which is collective-owned, could be expropriated by the government with some compensation.

Problems arise as long as only the government can decide the range of land that needs to be requisitioned and the price of land for compensation. It is not easy to stop governments making land requisitions (Liu, 2004, pp.50-53). Actually, land requisition becomes an effective instrument for the government to increase revenue by selling land (Ong, 2014, pp.173-176). However, for residents in China, land has a strong comprehensive social security function (Kong, 2009, p.27), as it links with basic living security. In this instance, when transformations of rural communities are usually related to land issues, conflicts between governments and local communities are commonly found. In most cases, interest of residents and communities are easily harmed (Zhang, 2002, p.143).

Secondly, the household registration system (*hukou dengji zhidu* 户口登记制度) (Duan, 2008, pp.43-50) has had the most profound impact on the transformation of community. The household registration system was fundamental to the development of China, as it was effective in the maintenance of social order under the planned economy (Cao, 2001, p.17). In other words, populations were tied to the land and unable to migrate to cities (Wang, 2003, pp.23-24). The traditional household registration system hindered the flow of rural surplus labour and delayed the process of urbanisation in rural areas, thus hampering the normal urbanisation process (Cao, 2001, pp.9-10). In addition to mobility barriers, the household registration system has also increased the differences between urban and rural lives and exacerbated severe inequality between the rich and the poor (Johnson, 2001). After the policy of Open and Reform (*gaigekai fang* 改革开放, from 1978), some scholars argued that household registration was an invisible wall (Chan, 1994). Huge differences in Chinese urban and rural populations in social welfare are attached to the household registration system. On one side the cities have better benefits and social welfare, and on the other side there is poor support of public services in rural areas. Specifically, the differences include various aspects of social security and

public services, such as housing, employment, medical and food supplies, water and electricity supply, and a series of subsidy systems.

According to the household registration system, migration in China can be literally divided into two categories: permanent migration and temporary migration. Permanent migration means migrants simultaneously transfer their household registration when they relocate to their new settlement (Chan & Yang, 2010) - migrants live where their household is registered. In contrast, if a person migrates without transferring their household registration, they are temporary migrants.

There is a principle named ‘permanent residence registration’ (permanent residence populations include people who live in their new settlement in cities and towns for more than 6 months) and this is used by the NBS (National Bureau of Statistics) to estimate China’s urbanization level. According to the newest statistics released by the NBS (National Bureau of Statistics), China’s urban rate of population growth is up to 53.7%<sup>15</sup>, while the urbanisation rate of household registration is just 35.3%<sup>16</sup>. The gap of almost 20% is accounted for by temporary rural migrations, nearly 250 million, most of which are rural migrant labour forces. Put another way, substantial numbers of rural-urban migrants that are counted in the urbanization statistics as urban residents are temporary migrants, a group which will contribute more and more to urbanization in the future. However, in fact, these rural migrants cannot enjoy the basic public services in cities and towns but are treated as migrants or a floating population<sup>17</sup>, and they typically do not have urban household registration (*hukou*).

From 2008, the Chinese central government released a document named ‘Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Big Issues on Promoting the Reform and Development of Rural Areas’, which stipulated that the Chinese government will promote the reform of household registration and loosen the restrictions of household registration applications in middle-sized and

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<sup>15</sup> 常住人口城镇化率, the ratio of people who are living in cities and towns in China’s total population is 53.7%. According to this, the amount is approximately 0.7 billion.

<sup>16</sup> 城镇化户口率, the ratio of people who hold urban household registration.

<sup>17</sup> Floating population, generally, means people who work in the city but do not get household registration where they work. They have to return to their hometown with no household registration. (see Wu & Li, 2016, pp.96-100). On spring festival, some big cities, such as Beijing, will become very empty; this can reflect the phenomenon: thousands of people return to their hometown for spring festival, Beijing becomes an empty city. <http://gb.cri.cn/42071/2014/01/30/6611s4410359.htm>.

small cities and towns. Briefly, the document aims to help migrants who have stable employment and residences in cities become urban citizens. However, according to the qualifications of successful application/transformation in different provinces and cities, the urban-rural household registration system is still a barrier for migrants. The general way, for example, he/she could transform his/her household registration into cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen would be to conform to the educational qualifications (at least to gain a bachelors' degree), or he/she could continually pay social welfare fees for at least 15 years with no suspension (Chen et al., 2011). As such, for most rural migrants, the household registration system still performs a particular mechanism of entry and exit to cities.

## **Conclusion**

It is valuable to use sociological theories to build links to the real situations of China. Western community studies and urban studies were undertaken in the context of capitalism (Weber, 1958, pp.80-81). Obviously, in China, there were different conditions for community and its development. Under these circumstances, it seems more useful and valuable to review community and its usage in Western academic work and then to explore community development in China, as 'community' was originally imported by Chinese scholars from abroad.

Community research is inseparable from the background of China's development. This research suggests that rural villages were similarly viewed as traditional communities by Chinese academics in early modern China. In socialist China, communes and work units became dissimilated forms of communities in a special period. China's reform and community construction was the biggest background for the transformation of communities, so surely it has had great effects. In the context of transformations, it is crucial to note the value of community because 'generally speaking, the more economically insecure the household, the greater will be its reliance on community and kin' (Gittins, 1986, p.251). The transformation of community is potentially foreseen in community construction relating to issues of land and household registration systems.

All in all, it is unreasonable to take an ideal type of community as the criteria on which to judge the transformations taken by community construction, just as in

Abrams' words, 'the paradox of community is the coexistence of a body of theory which constantly predicts the collapse of community and a body of empirical studies which finds community alive and well' (Abrams, 1978, p.12; cited in Crow & Allan, 1994, p.14). Also as Fei (1947, p.4) argued, after the rapid transformation from rural to modern ways of life, a traditional community cannot handle the complex situation which left the door open to the change of the forms of community in different areas in a new era. On the basis of previous community studies, the role community plays in post-traditional forms as well as traditional forms in modern society can be explored in the context of community construction in today's China.

## Chapter Three

### The revitalisation of ‘community’ by way of state-promotion in China:

#### A background research of community construction

##### Introduction

Community research is integral to the development of sociology in China and has progressed through several stages (see Chapter Two). In the 1950s, sociology was summarily declared to be ‘bourgeois pseudoscience’<sup>18</sup> by the authorities of China to prohibit its existence and development. In the 1980s, with the reintroduction of sociology, the term ‘community’ returned and was adopted by scholars and official usage again (Guo, 1993, p.145). Aligning with Chinese programs promoted by the state, such as ‘city and town-risation’ (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化), ‘new-type urbanisation’ and ‘community construction’, ‘community’ has experienced a process of transformation.

In China, community construction has become an integral part of urbanisation policies executed nationwide. The central government establishes the guiding ideology, basic principles, and main targets and tasks of community construction<sup>19</sup>. Local government formulates and implements the specific planning of community construction. With its power of top-down mobilisation, the unified mode of remaking communities could be promoted in a very short time. Underlying this promotion is the concern that governments use community construction to promote the development both in urban and rural areas. In this chapter, it explains why community construction is necessary in China’s particular context and from which, ‘community’ and its role in China’s urbanisation and community construction is examined. It also provides the definition of community construction. At the same time, the research focus of this thesis is clearly explained as the community construction which aims to transferring the rural villages to urban communities. In

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<sup>18</sup> The ideological confrontation between communism and capitalism in China was strong. Research and theories from the Western countries were banned by the government in that era (Tang, 2000, p.13).

<sup>19</sup> Chinese urban communities generally include several parameters, which are also treated as the standard of community construction to some extent, such as the number of people to be included, clear boundaries, necessary organisations and community centres (Bray, 2006, p.539).

addition, from the existing research into community construction, the gap that this research will address is clearly seen.

### **3.1 The demands of a transitional age: the rise of community construction**

#### **3.1.1 Reform of social welfare systems**

Economic reform has shaken the urban social structure of China (Wu, 2002, p.1078). The development of community was mainly driven by the demand generated by reform from 1978 onwards. Specifically, the development of community was driven by the reform of the social welfare system at first, which was promoted against a background of restructuring 'work units'. During the era of planned-economy, the system of work units was a fundamental form of community and social structure in urban China (see Chapter Two). Two different social welfare nets existed - firstly, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA), was responsible for the provision of social welfare for the population who did not belong to work units, and secondly work units took responsibility for the social welfare of their members.

However, the economic reform that began in the 1990s, which took restructuring of the work units system as an important aspect, led to massive lay-offs (Wang, 2003, p.48). In addition, with the policy of reform and opening up (from 1978), mass migrations became inevitable, although these were still limited by the household registration system. One could move around the country with no need to obtain written permission from the administrative authorities. Thus the age wherein populations were almost immobile was over and the demographic ratio changed as a result of massive volumes of migration and lay-offs. Overall, when one net of the social welfare system crumbled with the abolition of the work units system in the reform process, there was a need for a new system to be established in response to the problems created by the influx of migrant rural populations and the newly-unemployed urban populations, both in the scope of service-provision and the target populations.

The Chinese government encouraged social forces to participate in the construction of a new social welfare system and community was promoted and nurtured as an independent sector at the first time by the government (Pan, 2004). As such, 'community service' was promoted by the MCA as an alternative means to

provide social welfare. In 1986, the MCA officially adopted the term ‘community’ and the promotion of community service was originally aimed at the large number of newly-unemployed urban residents (Solinger, 2002, p.304) which was generated by the dismantled system of work units. Developing communities and community services, it was claimed can not only relieve the social burden of the state, but also serve to reconstruct a framework of social control and urban administration. Drawing on the above, it can be said that ‘community’ gained vitality from political procedures resorting to tackle the social problems caused by the reforms from the 1980s.

Community was required to undertake social functions and those functions of the government stripped away by the disintegration of work units (He, 2010, p.2). It was under these conditions that work units, or urban communities which they really were, started a process of transformation. Overall, community construction in urban environments was signalled by the restructuring of work units. Specifically, work units were expected to finally assimilate into the surrounding urban area and become new urban communities (Zhang & Chai, 2014, p.79) thus may have a profound impact on community construction (Lu, 1989, p.88). On the whole, in urban environments, community construction has been promoted on the basis of restructuring work units by the government. Community construction in this case is more likely to be consistent with the meaning of ‘community development’ (Sun, 1998, pp.52-53) or the renovation of urban communities (Wen & Yao, 2013, p.61).

### 3.1.2 Restructuring urban administration

As introduced in Chapter Two, ‘community’ was officially defined by the Chinese government and its boundary was ‘the area under the jurisdiction of the enlarged Residents’ Committee’ (Pan, 2004, p.21)<sup>20</sup>. As such, communities were stipulated as administrative units with clear boundaries demarcated by political power. The term ‘community’ was then transformed from a relatively abstract sociological idea into a specific form of social organisation, and community became a basic urban, social, political and administrative entity.

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<sup>20</sup> ‘The Ministry of Civil Affairs’ opinions on promoting the construction of urban community in the whole country’ 民政部关于在全国推进城市社区建设的意见. Zhongbanfa, 23rd document, Ministry of Civil Affairs, 3 November 2000, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40746/3491444.html>.



It is clear then that community closely interweaves with the urban administrative system. In China, the urban administrative system is generally constituted by four tiers of government: provincial, municipal, county/district, and street office levels<sup>21</sup>. According to China's administrative hierarchy and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, community lies at the level of the street office (*jiedaobanshichu* 街道办事处) in the urban administrative system (Wang, 2004, pp.71-74). Generally, community is governed by the street office and equates with the Residents' Committees (*juminweiyuanhui* 居民委员会). A Residents' Committee is not to be viewed as one administration level, for it is just a *paichujigou* 派出机构<sup>22</sup> of the local government. However, Residents' Committees are regarded as urban base-level organisations due to their responsibility for implementing the policies of higher levels of government.

The Communist Party of China (CPC), as the single ruling party, has taken social control as one of the most important parts of its policy. The branches of the CPC implement social control at all administrative levels. From the late 1980s to the early 2000s was officially seen as a period of transition and from October 2000, the CPC promoted a policy ('communist party building' - *dangjian* 党建) nationwide that aimed at establishing branches of the Communist Party in every community to ensure that all communities adapt to the age of social transformations (Pan, 2004). Within this new paradigm, communities, to some extent, were narrowed to quite specific grassroots administrative organisations through which 'community' deviated from its original meaning.

It should be made clear that the members of the Residents' Committees are mostly members of the Communist Party of China or 'reliable' retirees and volunteers identified by CPC. As such, communities that are led by Residents Committees become countless tentacles of the CPC and are used to govern urban life. Put another way, through the restructuring of the urban administrative system, the Communist Party of China used 'community construction' to achieve the aim of

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<sup>21</sup> Urban administrative systems have different classifications in China. Three tiers are: provincial, county-level, street office; Four tiers: provincial, municipal, county-level and district, street office. Although different situations appear in different places, the four tier system is the main urban administrative system recognised by scholars (Guo, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Representative organisation of government.

re-controlling the urban populations (Sun, 2004). When it is utilised in this way, ‘community’ becomes an ‘integral component of the governing process itself’ (Bray, 2006, p.533).

In addition to contribute to the establishment of the new social welfare system, ‘community’ in China was developed to meet the needs of restructuring the urban administration system. In short, ‘community’ has emerged in response to the recession of the planned economy (Bray, 2006, p.531). Aimed at striking a balance in development between urban and rural areas, campaigns of community construction have been seen as a state strategy by the government and scholars to achieve coordinated development towards modernisation and urbanisation (Long *et al.*, 2009, p.331).

### 3.1.3 Urbanisation (*chengshihua* 城市化) and ‘city and town-risation’ (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化): the role of ‘community’ in community construction

‘City and town-risation’ (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化) is a new term created by Chinese scholars and expressed by the Chinese government with Chinese characteristics<sup>23</sup>. To some extent, ‘city and town-risation’ (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化) was synonymously adopted as a terminology by the Chinese government to guide the development of China’s urbanisation (2002)<sup>24</sup>: the ‘new-type urbanisation’<sup>25</sup>. ‘New-type urbanisation’ is not aimed purely at increasing or expanding the proportion of the urban population; rather, ‘new-type urbanisation’ is explained as human-oriented, which stresses the development of people at all levels. Put another way, the new meaning lies in the migrant population’s *shiminhua* 市民化<sup>26</sup> (which means to achieve the same citizenship as urban citizens in China) and their interests being transferred into cities and towns have to be protected. Citizenship in China is closely related to resource allocation (Solinger, 1999, p.42). Access to state-controlled

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<sup>23</sup> ‘City and town-risation’ was first used and expanded by Gu Shengzu (1991) in his book *Feinonghua (non-farming) and Chengzhenhua (urbanisation)*.

<sup>24</sup> ‘The 16th CPC (Chinese Communist Party) national congress report’. 2002. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64162/64168/64569/65444/4429125.html>.

<sup>25</sup> In 2014, the new ‘national city and town-risation plan 2014-2020’ took ‘*chengzhenhua*’ as the main way to achieve the ‘new-type urbanisation’.

<sup>26</sup> To enable rural labour forces that migrated to the cities to share the same status as urban citizens, the first step is to achieve the same citizenship as urban citizens. *Shiminhua* also stresses the change from ‘village’ to ‘city’ in industrial support, human settlements, social security, lifestyles, and finally it aims to achieve urban-rural integration and sustainability (Shan & Huang, 2013, pp.17-18).

resources, the social welfare system as argued above, for example, is determined by the household registration system (Zhao, 2005, pp.286-287), which is still active in contemporary China (Carrillo, 2004, pp.2-3; Fleisher & Yang, 2006, p.12). As such, to promote residents' *shiminhua* is to focus on protecting the interests of rural migrants and mutually promoting the achievement of their urban status (Ni, 2013, p.52).

In order to achieve the goals of 'new-type urbanisation', the national strategy of *xiaochengzhenjianshe* (小城镇建设 translated directly as 'construction of small cities and towns' - mainly refers to *jianzhizhen*<sup>27</sup>) is promoted. Surplus labour forces in China run up to 200 million people (Cai & Wang, 2008, p.54; Bi, 2003, p.74), and it is not easy to rely on big cities to tackle the stress of absorbing this population. Thus, the resolution of the problem falls to the development of small towns, which aims to concentrate the broad rural population into the closest towns, or *jiujinzhuan yi* (就近转移). This is to say, instead of just relying solely on existing cities to absorb rural migrations, the government provides an alternative way: to construct *xiaochengzhen* (小城镇 small cities and towns), namely the way of 'city and town-risation'. To state it more clearly, this is more like a form of labour force transformation than population redistribution, and rural populations 'leave the soil but stay in the towns' (Guo & Wang, 2004, p.42). In this instance, the construction of towns (Wang, 2003, pp.62-65) are paid more attention to by the government.

From 1978 to 2007, the number of distinct towns in China increased from 2,173 to 19,249, the total number of towns increasing by 17,076, with an average of 569 founded every year (China Economic & Trade Yearbook, 2009). Drawing on the experience of some developed countries, towns played the role of 'reservoirs' to distribute metropolitan populations and 'junctions' to disseminate development from cities to rural areas (Li, Chen & Liu, 2012, p.97). The Chinese government also expects to make towns as connection points between cities and rural villages, and through the construction of towns, to enhance the link between rural and urban areas. In short, the path of 'city and town-risation' is to rely, in a broad-sense, on towns to

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<sup>27</sup> *Jianzhizhen* 建制镇 refers to the towns that are formally established through the process of law and their administration/management systems that are approved and recorded by the State Council. This concept is used to distinguish them from natural towns. Urban statistics sometimes equate the administration area with the urban statistical area that broadens its boundaries.

achieve the conversion of lifestyles from rural to urban. In other words, ‘city and town-risation’ not only pursues the expansion of urban spaces, but in recent years it has focused on enhancing the meaning of towns by providing culture and public services aimed at making cities and towns more suitable for human settlement with a higher quality of life.

Due to the demands of ‘city and town-risation’, as the basic administrative units of towns are street offices and Residents’ Committees, it is necessary to construct new communities that are located on the level of Residents’ Committees (see the arguments above: restructuring urban administration) to achieve the integration of urban and rural realms (Li, 2013, pp.30-32). Overall, community construction is an integrated process. A relationship of interdependence and interaction between community and community construction is confirmed by this study due to the critical issues community linked to, historically and practically. It is clearly seen that community has been interwoven with socio-political structures and a process of remaking social life, which was demanded by the concerns of a transitional age. Moreover, community construction is not intended to create a completely Western community model, but one based on the reality of China to reposition community and promote community development. On the basis of the above analysis, the process of transformation from rural to urban communities has been managed through community construction, to achieve the goal of urbanisation.

### **3.2 Community construction**

There are many studies on ‘remaking community’, which is a process ‘hampered by the perception of community life as ‘natural’ and thus antithetical to planned intervention’ (Crow & Allan, 1994, p.133). In addition, there are debates about the goal of remaking communities: the creation of ‘mixed class communities’ (Lawless & Brown, 1986, p.142) or ‘a microcosm of contemporary...society’ (Aldridge, 1979, p.106) to achieve social balance. Similar situation also exists in China. Due to the long-lasting and highly uneven dual urban-rural structure, community construction in urban areas gained priority over rural community construction, which has marginalised rural communities and villages (Li & Li, 2009, p.110). However, community construction was more likely to be regarded as equal to

community development in the campaigns that aimed to renovate the work units in urban areas (Yang, 2014, pp.42-44; Wang, 2004, pp.67-68; Sun, 2004, pp.33-35).

The Chinese society is ‘fundamentally rural’ (Fei, 1947) that has lasted for several thousand years and there are still nearly half of the total populations are living in rural areas in contemporary China (World Bank data)<sup>28</sup>. Currently, rural China is experiencing a period of transition (Long, Heilig & Li *et al.*, 2007, p.142). Community construction is not only taken as one of the most important parts of urbanisation, but it also involves populations who will be migrated from their original villages and communities to new communities over the next several decades (Kleinwechter, 2012, p.758), namely, from rural to urban. This is to say, serving the support of the populations transferred from rural to urban areas is the major factor that make community construction profound. Due to this, transformation from rural to urban taken by community construction naturally become the research focus of this thesis.

In this context, though it is not easy to master the guidelines in China, community construction is used to construct new communities (Si, 2011, pp.89-94; Jin, 2013, pp.18-23), and the meaning of remaking community is exactly in the usage of urban planning policies. Against the background of rapid urbanisation/‘city and town-risation’, community construction refers to a special mode of re-construction through which the government plans to concentrate the natural scattered villages with nearby geo-spatial locations together to form new communities. These new communities are often constructed in accordance with existing forms of urban communities (Si, 2011, p.89; Luo *et al.*, 2006, p.24; Yang, 2008, p.1). The goal of community construction is recognised as neither a renovation of the villages nor a simple process of concentrating populations, but to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas, and consequently to enable the migrated populations to enjoy the same public services as urban citizens.

Overall, in response to transformations from rural to urban, namely urbanising rural areas, the meaning of re-construction of ‘community’ is the core of community construction. Community construction in China is a government-led mode of constructing new communities that aims to create social cohesion and public

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<sup>28</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org.cn/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>

responsibility in response to the decline of collectivism caused by economic reform (Derleth & Koldyk, 2004; Xu, 2008). As such, the link between home villages and new communities should be an important consideration and cannot only be considered as a process of migration and relocation (Cai, 2003, pp.482-483). In addition, from the specific aspects of community construction that have been investigated by researchers, the gap between the existing research and where those that will be discussed can be clearer.

### **3.3 Community construction in China: a study of existing studies**

There are some considerations of ‘the need to create communities that appear ‘natural’” (Bray, 2006, p.538). It is also common that governments intervene in community building and involve themselves in community business (Campfens, 1997). In China, community construction is generally led by village organisations, or the CPC and the village’s committee (Luo *et al.*, 2006, p.24). Community construction is wholly a government-led endeavour in China and it is never a natural process under the government’s intervention.

Experiences of community construction in foreign countries are summarised and used as examples by Chinese scholars, such as the cooperative relationship between government and community in Singapore (Chu & Xu, 2014, p.43), or utilised to emphasise the role of NGOs in community development (Song, 2007, p.467) and to advocate for the participation of social agencies in community activities (Zhu, 2006, p.3). However, these summaries lead to suggestions of ‘should do’ or ‘can do’ expressed in such forms as ‘the cultural soul of cities should be shaped by community construction in issues of culture’ (Liu, 2006, p.13), or ‘to speed up community construction by broadening the channels of employment’ (Jia, 2014, pp.118-119). There exists a deficiency of theoretical explorations and shady of practical experiences. It is time to check the specific aspects of Chinese community construction by reviewing the existing studies.

### 3.3.1 Community construction and economic change

Residents in the new ‘communities’ are engaging with market forces more than ever before (Newell, 2005, p.541). First and foremost, land requisition and land compensation are seen as the main bottlenecks in the construction of new communities (Zhang, Zheng & Wang, 2013, p.6; Li et al., 2009, p.264; Tan, Li & Xie, 2005, p.194). Specifically, multiple interest groups become important forces in community construction. In some cases, the farmers and their legal demands cannot be respected (Gao, 2008, pp.36-37) because the interests of government and residents could be contradictory in land requisition and land compensation, as was argued in Chapter Two. That is to say, when expropriating collective-owned land, farmers cannot gain a guarantee of their interests. Additionally, the age of houses as public goods which were allocated by government is over, and houses are consequently commercialised as commodities (Chen et al., 2011, p.219; He & Lu, 2007, p.49). The analysis of housing price and urbanisation (Chen, Guo & Wu, 2011, pp.219-232) gives some evidence that housing problems (Ding, 2008, p.154) should be notable in urban community construction. For example, in terms of land compensation, allocation of new houses becomes a hot point in the newly-constructed communities.

The land provides livelihoods, social security and rural employment (Zhao & Wang, 2013, pp.126-130). Moving to a new community means taking the risk of losing land and the interests attached to it (Jing & Yang, 2002, p.91; Tao & Xu, 2007, p.1304). As such, the obstacles residents in the newly-constructed communities face are not purely about changing of modes of production, but about their future way of life (He, 2006, p.94). The status of families as independent economic units in the past has already been changed because of land loss and thus the economic viability of residents living new lifestyles is critical after relocating to the newly-constructed communities.

Urbanising rural areas by community construction involves the economic development of a regional area (Selman, 2006, pp.244-245). Thus, community construction seems to give residents more free choice, through which they could gain personal income either by regional development or economic development (Kleinwechter, 2012, p.782). However, non-farm employment, with the loss of arable land, has become an important problem for residents (Benjamin, Brandt & Giles,

2005, pp.803-805). Evidence shows that the re-employment of surplus rural labourers is personally stressful (Ma & Li, 2012, p.227). In addition, from rural to urban living, needless to say, the transformation of farmers' identities is also an important issue in relation to their separation from land (Deng, 2012, p.93).

### 3.3.2 Community construction, social networks and social capital

Transformations of community construction have brought about huge changes to the form, function and social character of 'community' (Xu, 2008, p.145). Social involvement on the basis of local context is the natural origin of interpersonal relations (Schiefloe, 1990, pp.93-103; Xu & Chan, 2011, p.416). As such, regional discrepancies have major potential influences on investigations of social relations (Long & Liu, 2010, p.461). In the case of community construction, social networks based on local context could be changeable with the alteration of social structures from rural to urban livings. Additionally, investigations mainly in urban areas have left gaps in understanding the possible situations of rural communities (Kotus, 2006, pp.364-381). People in rural areas are generally viewed as having stronger social ties than in more urbanised areas (Fischer, 1982) and the quality and quantity of social interactions are also believed to be stronger in rural communities than cities (Lev-Wiesel, 2003, pp.339-340). These investigations provide valuable references for the further research of social networks in community construction in this research.

One major characteristic of community construction in China is the overemphasis on constructing physical facilities and tangible infrastructure. Landscape is critical to 'mark the difference between a rural and an urban built environment' (Bray, 2013, p.54). As argued before, the relocation of settlement and reconstruction of houses is closely related to spatial change. Additionally, the relocation of residents into newly-constructed communities not only comes with economic problems, but involves changes in the social base. As such, in the new residential areas, the transformations of spaces could have a great impact on social and neighbourhood relations.



Villages are passively involved in urbanisation and demarcated into 'communities' by administrative power. Certainly, the newly-constructed settlements have been nominally referred to as urban communities. The contradiction between residents' traditional ways of life and changed social networks after relocating to the newly-created 'communities' (Li, 2007, p.85) is also a focus of this research. As Guo (1994, p.56) argued, although traditional relations showed a tendency towards weakening, the traditional kinship-relationship rooted in traditional Chinese culture would not disappear in the process of rural modernisation. In addition, for the members of newly-constructed communities with deep rural roots, lifestyles may not have fundamentally changed. Possibly, residents who had relocated to the new 'communities' could still keep the emphasis on emotional life, family, clan, and village folk-connections, while other traditional ties still play a leading role in 'half acquaintance-society' (Zhu & Wang, 2011, p.24). This is to say that residents may begin to live in urban residences, but they do not enjoy a genuinely urban life (Chung & Unger, 2013, p.33) - with dismantled neighbourhood relations in community construction, for instance (Li, 2008, p.87). Overall, in community construction, relocating farmers to an urban-style settlement is easier than settling them in an urban-style life (Jia, 2014, p.119). In addition, with community construction, it is possible that residents in a short term are not treated as urban citizens and viewed as 'the farmers living in the high-rise buildings', though the pace of transformation has been stepped up by the villagers (Chen, 2013, p.86).

In this case, the so-called 'communities' are more administrative entities based on physical features and geographical boundaries than something based on the traditional meaning of community because 'physical proximity does not always lead to the establishment of social relations' (Stacey, 1969, p.144). Additionally, community life cannot be created in a formulaic way and 'it would be misleading to assume that...a recently-built housing estate...will have the same strong neighbourhood ties and sense of community identity as those where people have lived for generations' (Finnegan, 1985, p.167). Thus, even if we can characterise urban life by certain parameters (Wirth, 1938, p.18), it is not easy to measure the social costs and sacrifice of people who relocate from rural to urban communities.

Changes in social networks closely relate to changes in social capital in community construction (Zhou, 2013, pp.64-66). Social capital is divided into three aspects: social trust, regulations and social networks (Belliveau *et al.* 1996, p.1572; Bourdieu, 1986, p.248; Xiang & Li, 2010, pp.4-7; Wu, 2008, p.126). Neighbourhood, family, friends, work relationships, organisational relationships are all basic elements of social networks. The weakening of social capital in community construction (Pan, 2008, p.104) is characterised by the loss of interpersonal relations, the low degree of social trust and the loss of community identification (Lang, 2005, pp.20-22). In addition, in community construction, the administrative systems have overwhelmingly limited the ability of social units to function, and consequently failed to provide room for the cultivation of social capital to facilitate community construction (Xu, 2008, p.148). As such, even social capital is seen as an alternative way to solve the problems that cannot be solved directly by a strong political system, social capital is not easy to be cultivated practically (Miao, 2007, p.199).

### 3.3.3 Community construction, culture and traditions

The benefit of community construction is usually described by researchers as ‘community construction enriches the cultural life of residents’ (Jin & Liu, 2009, p.33), or community construction can maintain historical traditions and nurture new community culture (Zhang, Zhang & Ma, 2009; He, Yu & Fang, 2001). Rather than too abstract, culture and tradition in community construction seem to be analysed appropriately in relation to the change of social networks and economic change. One such change that could be influenced directly is clan. The ideological roots of Chinese people cannot be rapidly changed (Qu, 2011, p.98). Clan has played important role in community culture (Qian & Xie, 1990, pp.21-24). An important feature of clan is high cohesion among clan members and repulsion of external things. As such, through providing their members with standard values of behaviour and codes of ethics, clans maintain the political stability of the rural community (Luo, 2002, p.44). Economically, clan has had vital significance in attracting investment and promoting the development and expansion of the rural economy (Cong, 2009). However, it has been demonstrated by some researchers that the role of clans in China was gradually weakening and clan

structure has changed (Liu, 2012, pp.13-16). As such, clans and their cultural, economic and political functions in community construction will also be explored by this research.

Furthermore, it is necessary to construct a link between the spatial changes and cultural issues in the community construction setting. The construction of infrastructure provides more spaces and facilities for public activities (Ding, 2008, p.155), which is indispensable for community cultural development, and more importantly, community activities. However, the increasing strength of administrative control achieved through restructuring grass-roots political organisations (Ma & Li, 2012, p.231) at the same time contradicts the policy of self-development of community that is advocated by the government.

#### 3.3.4 Community construction or social construction?

The relationship between government and society is one point that scholars focus on in community construction. In fact, taking the relationship between government and society as one of the angles from which to analyse community construction is actually to regard community as the domain of interactions between administrative power and social forces (Li & Chen, 2008, p.86). To some extent, community construction means a process of modifying Chinese grass-roots social life. In social management and the reconstruction of social organisations, community construction has unique value. After the transformation from rural villages to urban 'communities', the administrative organisations of governments also need to be rebuilt in grass-roots society through community construction (Yang, 2007, pp.138-139). Thus in this sense, community construction could be viewed as microcosmic social construction (Wang, 2008, pp.42-45), but the relationship between government and society after community construction is expected by researchers to become more co-operative (Xu, 2008, p.150).

Some scholars have examined the development of community participation so far in China (Ma & Li, 2012, pp.224-247). For example, newly-constructed 'communities' not only inherited their traditional autonomy from the villages committees, but also took urban communities as a template to establish community management systems (Zhao *et al.*, 2007, pp.34-36). As has been clearly stipulated in

national policy, community autonomy and self-governance are considered essential in community construction (Zeng, 2008, pp.85-88). Some researchers argued that after nearly 20 years, a community management system that combines the government-leading and self-governance of residents has been established (Xu, 2007, p.57; Xu, 2001, p.9). In this instance, some scholars believe that a mode of 'strong government - strong society' and the combination of government-leading and community autonomy should be the orientation of Chinese community construction (Ma & Liu, 2005, p.160).

However, in the political structure of community construction, it is the state that truly possesses the power of decision-making. Under political discipline, residents lack ways to participate in community affairs, decision-making processes or community management (He, 2007, p.85). In addition, residents used to relying on the government in the era of planned-economy may not be able to build their own communities (Song, 2010, pp.260-261). Residents' Committees also do not have ample space for free choice, thus they must copy the organisational mode of the upper government and execute relevant policies. As a result, communities do not become active fields for social forces, but are taken back into the government regulatory system (Chen, 2010, pp.109-113; Wang, 2009, p.209).

Self-governing organisations and community service organisations are developed to mobilise the masses to participate in community activities (Chen, 2000, p.105; Liu & Fu, 2007, pp.73-74). However, in the process of community construction, some affairs can only be decided and discussed by the residents themselves (Fei, 2002, pp.15-18) rather than the representatives of administrative organisations. As such, challenges in interactions between different interest subjects in community construction, such as government, community, residents, social organisations, will serve as one of the focuses in this research.

### 3.3.5 Community construction and path choices

Because of the diversity of local contexts, the hypothesis that urbanisation in China will follow the path of the West (Sztompka, 2006, pp.454-456) has been denied by Chinese scholars, and consequently, a common view was formed that China has to find its own urbanisation style (Song, 2007, pp.464-467). It is suggested

that urban planning provides the tools to solve the problems within rural community construction (Bray, 2013, p.53). In urban planning, the government often issues a checklist or standards to show and describe both the construction contents and evaluation metrics, either quantitative or qualitative. For example, rural community construction generally includes 5 aspects: the construction of infrastructure and the governance of living environment; the establishment of modern community administrative management and public service systems (to improve rural residents' social security systems); constructing healthy and orderly rural grassroots political life; developing democracy in rural community; rural residents' ideological and moral construction (to promote the cultural construction of local settlement and foster a new community) (Hu, 2008, pp.17-18; Jiao, 2012, p.13). These aspects can be demonstrated in most community construction cases (Wang, 2009, pp.57-60; Li, Huang & Yuan, 2013, pp.46-48). Problems occur as the uniformity assumed by urban planning ignores the actual diversity and creativity in local contexts (Shieh & Friedmann, 2008, p.193). Even so, there are still some models of community construction that can be summarised and used as a reference.

*Natural transition mode.* This is a typical mode of rural community construction that was promoted in Jiangxi province. This pattern was adopted as a method of 'centre plus village', which means to build and construct 'community' by spreading gradually from a central village. On the basis of keeping the original and historical style and features, no major changes were made to the villagers' living place. This pattern focused on constructing facilities for public services and it aims to provide villagers with a colourful cultural life and closer relationships. It also aimed to reduce neighbourhood disputes and increase the cohesion of the village (Shan, 2010, p.47).

*'Organisation reengineering' mode of Zigui.* This pattern is summarised from the Zigui county of Hubei province. It is based on a rural community construction model employed in the town of Yang Linqiao. The town was built in accordance with the several principles: regional-proximity, industrial convergence, in moderate scale and respect the willingness of the masses. This pattern aimed to establish a new organisational structure: 'village committee - community council (*shequ lishihui* 社区理事会) - cooperative peers (*huzhuzu* 互助组) - basic farmers'. The most

important feature of this mode was the emphasis on the effect of micro organisations in rural community development (Xu, 2006, pp.8-11).

*Urban lead rural model of Jiaonan.* This is a model from Shandong province. The government of Jiaonan put forward six measures to construct a new community: environmental renovation, dismantling old and constructing new houses, living standard improvement, the reformation of the village's committee, integrating villages and new countryside construction. The hope is that these measures can make the rural community an important carrier for integrated development between urban and rural environments. With the gradual transfer of public resources from urban to rural community, facilities and services covering rural expansion, it expects to realise the rapid development of the rural community (Yuan, 2010, pp.130-135).

*'1.2.3.4.5' model - Taicang model from Jiangsu Province.* The '12345' project is as follows: one outdoor space for community activity; Two positions (Bulletin board, publicity column); Three community work teams (professional management team, community service staff team and community volunteer team); Four rooms (the elderly and the disabled room, police office, clinic, multi-function room); Five stations (agricultural community service station, social service station, health service station, social security service station, comprehensive administrative service station). Based on the project and standardised construction, the rural community service system is gradually formed and improved (Zhao, 2006, p.23; Wu & Wang, 2014, p.110).

It has to be made clear that most paths of community construction are summarised by researchers from the explanations of policies. Moreover, some of these policies are expectations that need time to prove themselves. Whatever forms community construction may take, in general, they can be summarised as follows: a core - the leadership of the communist party; two goals - community service and community autonomy; dual driven power - government and society; and three governance bodies - the government, community and social organisations (Ding, 2009, p.160).

### **3.4 The transitional role of communities in community construction and urbanisation**

Community construction is not considered as the ultimate goal of urbanisation but rather a means to an end or, more accurately, a process rather than a result. Community construction aims to achieve the conversion of residents from rural peasants to urban citizens, rather than simply relocating them into urban-style communities. 'Community' is a double-sided coin in Chinese urbanisation. On one side, it is shaped from the outside - the forces of urbanisation and administrative power - and must continue to do so for the reform process to be maintained. On the other side, we find deep nostalgia formed by a long history - the expectation that the newly-constructed communities would make life better under administrative intervention, which is an uncertain prospect.

In the eyes of the state, 'community' necessarily assumes the historical responsibility to transfer lifestyles from rural to urban settings. 'Communities' constructed by way of community construction are not the end and the process has to support the development of residents. By using 'community' as the carrier, this process is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. For example, community construction includes the breakdown of original relations in the old villages and the establishment of new relations in new 'communities'. In other words, historically, it played the role of successor to inherit social life of old villages, thus helping to settle residents in the newly-constructed 'community'. In a transitional age, the familiar society which in Fei's eyes (2002) means the normal situation of life is summarised as 'one was born, grows old and dies in the same place', has changed significantly. The replacement of the old community by a newly-constructed one not only means physical change, but 'community' plays a transitional role in the further expansion of urban social structure (Xu, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

Community development shows political characteristics in China both on the side of policy-making and concrete aspects of construction. In China, the urban-rural dual structure has been an obstruction to the further development of China's society and 'community' (Chan & Zhang, 1999, p.823; Lu & Chen, 2004, pp.52-53) and the

urban and rural dichotomy is still very sharp even in the contemporary period. Community construction is deemed as necessary because a demand to promote rural-urban integration comes from the reform of the welfare system, restructuring of urban administration and urbanisation.

The relationship between community construction and urbanisation is interactive. Resorting modern and professional community management is deemed to be useful to achieve community construction and urbanisation (Li, 2014, p.33); urbanisation by constructing 'communities' is attractive for the large numbers of out-migrated workers who want to work but also wish to settle down in cities. By reviewing the specific aspects of community construction, whatever community construction is related to, the core problem is the proper settlement of transferred populations and the ultimate achievement of urban citizenship.

China's peculiar institutional settings and urban policies make community unique in a modern setting (Shen, 2000). The development of 'community' in a constructive way may 'inevitably foster a more open society in China' (Miu & Jian, 2007, p.234). However, we may find doubts over community construction expressed before having answers and the answers are also at risk of being obscured by the unique particulars of China. Only the residents who have experienced the community construction process can truly reflect the reality of the situation, and this is also what the fieldwork for this thesis is committed to achieve.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Theoretical tools, methodology and fieldwork**

#### **Introduction**

This study has sought to explore community as understood through the campaign of community construction and in what ways community was constructed. The literature in Chapter Two suggests community is likely to prove an incredibly difficult concept to investigate empirically. However, chapters two and three assert the crucial importance of community in exploring community construction, and as such, make ‘community’ an unavoidable research subject. This study focused upon the community life that comprised of individuals’ ‘understandings and interpretations of their social environments’ (May, 2001, p.26) and attempted to ‘document the world from the point of view of the people studied’ (Hammersley, 1992, p.165). The nature of this study as community research determined that qualitative research was the optimal method to serve the aim, which was attributed to: on one side, researchers engaged in qualitative research need to get closely involved with the research subject in order to immerse into the context so that they might make sense of it (Tracy, 2012, p.3); on the other side, as recommended by Becker (1998) and Lofland et al. (2006), naturalistic and open-ended methods to study social interactions were useful because they allowed researchers to use their own language to describe the social practices embedded in their everyday lives.

The choice of research method should clearly depend on the research questions asked (see Chapter One). The case study method provided an intensive and in-depth way to focus on and analyse an ‘individual unit’ (Stake, 2008, pp.119-120). In this research, a newly-constructed community was selected as the unit of study to explore how community was conceptualised and understood by residents. Exploring tangible changes in the physical environment and intangible changes of social life, an advantage to using the case study method in this research was that it helped the researcher to keep close to the unit of study and to the real-life situations. In case studies, close-up interactions between the empirical world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and researcher also elicits the requirement that researchers be immersed into the ongoing researching of topics within a social context - a meaningful complex formed

by all aspects of social life (Lévi-Strauss, 1955, p.432). Community-based research is one way of immersion, which means that empirical work should be implemented into the whole social context (Dempsey, 1990, p.10). This immersion puts the researcher in close contact with research subjects - in this research, the newly-constructed community is where the research topics were generated and the ideas of residents were discussed and investigated.

In addition, developmental factors were often emphasized in case studies due to a case generally evolve in time (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p.301). Relocating from the rural villages to an urban community, the transformation of residents' lifestyles and their adaptations to the new settlement also stressed the time factors. In summary, case study method is especially appropriate for this research and for the community theory development (Walton, 1992, p.129; George & Bennett, 2005, pp.6-9) in the China's context of community construction. Case study admitted by this research has enabled the researcher to: trace the process of community construction, including causes and outcomes; make a detailed exploration of a newly-constructed community construction case; understand community and its development in the China's context of urbanization; format new hypotheses about community construction and promoting further research.

Overall, the research aims were achieved by the most appropriate approach and the most efficacious methods to conduct the research and analyse the data. The research has been conducted appropriately to achieve the aim of this study. This chapter will provide the details of how this research has been conducted. It outlines the theoretical tools and issues relating to ethics in this research. The methods of data collection used in this study are explained and the fieldwork described how they connect with research questions. A brief introduction to the data analysis is also given.

#### **4.1 The case-study settings**

The identification of the case of study is linked to the design of the research, as well as to the specific properties of the newly-constructed community. In this research, data should be collected primarily and most effectively from the place where the campaign of community construction was conducted. The sources of data

made this research closely associated with case study, which is an ideal methodology for building theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Feagin et al., 1991). In addition, it was better to undertake a common approach when conducting community research which focuses on community, namely, to undertake a locality-based study (Walklate & Evans, 1999; Girling et al., 2000). Drawing on the above, to provide data for the subsequent construction of theory, a newly-constructed community where residents have experienced community construction was chosen.

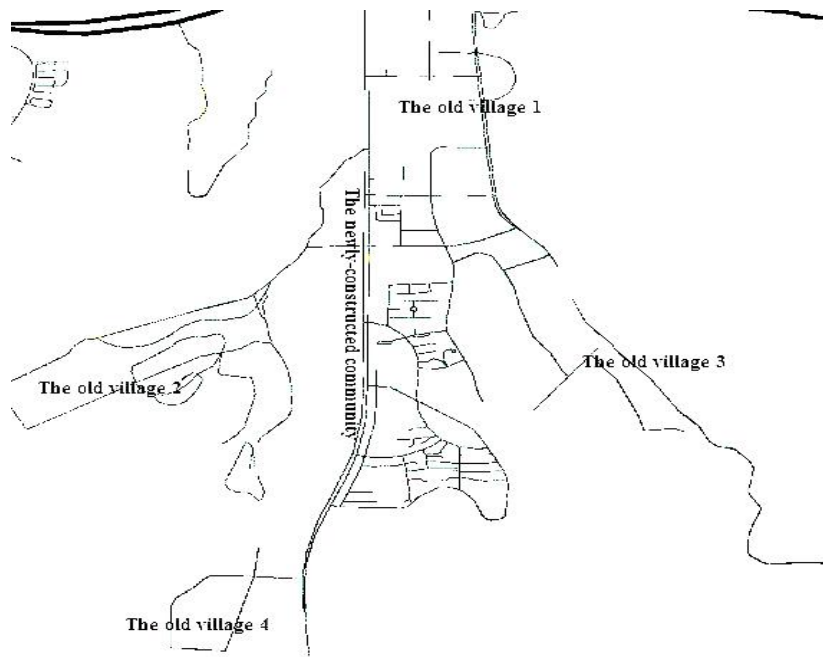
Figure 4-1 The map of China<sup>29</sup>



Specifically, I chose a ‘settlement’, named PY, as the case of a newly-constructed community to demonstrate the complexity of community construction, which is located to the east of Z city, Shandong province, China (see, Figure 4-1). The newly-constructed community was formed by merging 4 different villages (see Figure 4-2). This new ‘community’ is viewed by the local government as an urban settlement that has achieved the goal of urbanising rural areas. The transformation from rural villages to urban settlement represents a common way of community construction which offered the potential for data collection. Additionally, the particularity and typicality of this new community offered good objective conditions as a case through which to evaluate the effects of community construction. Two points were given to explain the suitability of the newly-constructed community as a study case area:

<sup>29</sup> Map was copied from (I added three marks to show the location of ShanDong Province.): <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B+%E4%BA%94+%E5%80%8B+%E8%87%AA%E6%B2%BB%E5%8D%80&tbm>.

Figure 4-2 Old villages and the newly-constructed community



*A. The new community's own characteristics*

It is clear that during the process of transferring from rural to urban settings, the four villages involved in the study have experienced drastic changes. It took four to five years to complete the whole relocation and construction process. Residents have relocated to and lived in the new settlement for a period of time, thus potentially avoiding a negative impact on the data caused by the readjustment after relocation. This was important to the validity of the data collected for this research, which is also critical to the research aim that to assess whether a community was formed on the basis of the communal life in the new settlement.

*B. The newly-constructed community was not isolated*

Community construction by merging villages was typical and common in China. This mode was even adopted and issued in a provincial urban planning<sup>30</sup>. In this instance, the examination of this case could provide valuable information to understand the situation of 'community' and other cases of community construction, which also conforms to the research objectives as argued previously. Concrete knowledge could be gained from the case study area. The selection of this newly-

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.shandong.gov.cn/art/2014/10/27/art\\_285\\_6670.html](http://www.shandong.gov.cn/art/2014/10/27/art_285_6670.html) 山东省新型城镇化规划(2014-2020年). The new type urbanisation/urban and town-risation plan of Shandong province (2014-2020).

constructed community provided the possibility to formulate a generalized characterisation of China's community construction, at least in Shandong province. In addition, the goal of this case study is not to make the case be 'all things to all people' but 'different things to different people'. The story of this community construction case itself is the result and a 'virtual reality' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.238). The newly-constructed community could be described through many facets (see Chapters five, six, seven and eight) thus different people may discover their own meanings from the case study of community construction.

A mixed methods approach was adopted in this research to collect data. The methods I used for collecting 'slices of data' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.68) included documentary research, observations and semi-structured interviews. The following sections will describe and discuss why these methods of data collection were selected and how the research was conducted from the considerations of ethics, the problems that were encountered and how they were tackled, how data was analysed is also given.

## **4.2 Documentary research**

Researchers usually have reviewed the relevant literature before the commencement of fieldwork, so they could conduct a substantial study with background knowledge (Smith & Biley, 1997). This is to say, for the researchers, it is difficult to ignore literature or to avoid pre-conceptualisation (Bulmer, 1979). Cutcliffe (2000) supports prior reading, as it may help researchers clarify concepts and construct theory and to use 'grounded theory is not an excuse to ignore the literature' (Suddaby, 2006, p.634). Furthermore, researchers can establish and expound hypotheses they receive from existing literature and let them become part of the data (Glaser, 1998, p.120). With constant comparison to and review of social phenomenon, this can produce an echo with existing literature as well (Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 1995). However, still one thing should be kept in mind, which is that researchers cannot use the pre-set, imagined concepts and hypotheses to guide data collection (Shah & Corley, 2006, p.1827).

Data collection in my research did not exclude existing literature, and it started with a review of the documents. In view of the complexity of community

research, documentary research should be comprehensive and highlight the focus of the research. Thus, the records and documents in relation to community construction and the case study area were selected, which can be categorised into two parts (see Table 4-1):

*A. Primary and secondary documents*

These documents included openly published literature both in Chinese and English. Specifically, these were obtained through archives or library catalogues.

*B. Public documents*

Officially promulgated policies and regulations, or official records and documents, newspapers and journals were main sources; for example, the ‘Village Records’. These public documents were accessed through community committees, upper government and official websites.

Table 4-1 Sources of documents

Primary and secondary	Public
Literature on community	Relevant urban planning documents
Literature on community construction	Administrative stipulations
Literature on China’s community construction	Village Records
	Regulations released by governments
	Relevant policies (land management, social welfare, community service)

Documentary research was important to the current research through a deeper understanding of the transitional process from the start to the end of community construction. Through documentary research, information regarding what has been going on was gained and familiarity with background knowledge was established. Moreover, it is needless to say that solving the research questions through building

up theoretical foundations was partly based on documentary research.

### 4.3 Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained prior to the fieldwork being conducted. This study received approval from the Ethics Committee, School of Law & Social Justice, University of Liverpool, in advance of all empirical work being undertaken. In addition, the research ethics approval from the country where the researchers were to conduct their research was also requested by the School of Law & Social Justice. As such, I also got the approval from research ethics committee of Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China.

The research did not involve participants who were particularly vulnerable. All of the participants are adults that were informed of aspects relevant to their participation in the study and could make decisions to join the research, or not, freely. The interviews were conducted after first gaining informed consent from the research participants. In order to do this, I translated all relevant forms (participant consent form and participant information sheet) into Chinese in advance. When participants were identified, I then contacted them and explained the research to them explicitly. Where possible, I emailed them or gave them the printed copies of the information sheet and consent forms (all translated into Chinese), so that they could read them in advance of the interview. Before the interviews, I read through the information sheet with participants again and verbally explained the purpose of gaining their informed consent before giving participants time to sign the consent form, assuming they were happy to do so.

In my fieldwork, I clearly disclosed my research identity and explained my research. In discussing my role as researcher, I have already made reference to the attaining of the requisite *guanxi* and local approval, as well as assuring interviewees of my neutrality in matters related to community construction. In some cases during my observation sessions, however, I did not disclose my researcher status, and that was for the purpose of observing the natural appearances of how things occurred.

The participants' anonymity was guaranteed at the outset of the process. This guarantee was reiterated at the beginning of each interview. To preserve the confidentiality of the data, I sought to disguise the identity of my interviewees by

using pseudonyms for participants. In the analytical chapters, participants are only presented by their identity (ordinary residents = R; cadres = C), gender (female and male) and age. In some cases, I ‘fudged’ who said what by sometimes splitting one actor into several and at other times combining several actors into one (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). These measures were taken primarily for ethical reasons of responsibility to the participants, and had no analytic importance to the research itself.

#### **4.4 Field observation**

Sometimes information from documents cannot provide sufficient direct angles to what is really going on in a newly-constructed community. Observation was taken as an effective and complementary method for this research, as it is a means to reflect what is going on in the community and can be embedded in broader levels of context (Evertson & Green, pp.165-166). As such, non-participant observation was undertaken to check, examine and enrich the data collection (Blumer, 1986) in this research. In addition, observations helped in understanding the research and identifying important aspects that required further investigation. Specifically, non-participant observation was used to put the researcher into the observed settings to explore and comprehend various research topics:

1. To see the differences in physical appearance between the new community and the old villages - for further inquiry into the influences on social life;
2. To explore the situation of the interactions of residents in the newly-constructed community;
3. Who attends public places and how do they do so?
4. What other activities of residents take place in the newly-constructed community?

Bearing these questions in mind, I lived in the new community during my fieldwork in 2015 (nearly 3 months). In the new community, I rode a bike around the community almost every day, thereby conducting my observations on a daily basis. The observation lasted until the end of my field work. Becoming familiar with the settings of the new settlement was the first step. Making myself acquainted with the residents was convenient for me to observe public activities and residents’ communal



lives. I took some photos to portray the face and the situation of community life. By providing photographs of the old villages, the new settlement and communal life, it was possible to see the transformations from rural to urban living over time. To some extent, this has also facilitated the analysis of data based on photographic images taken during the observation period.

My fieldwork observations provided me with a rather general picture of communal life and I identified certain important factors that were shaping the formation of the new community. However, the observations at the same time also generated some questions. The observations were not able to explain the reasons why communal life happened and how the new situations were formed. Observation acted as a complementary step to further inquiry into the research questions that we should ask of the respondents.

#### **4.5 The semi-structured interviews**

Most of the data has been drawn from interviews because in-depth insight into this area cannot be acquired through documentary research and field observations. Semi-structured interviews, which were conducted as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess, 1984, p.102) allowed me to understand the complexity between the external reality of the newly-constructed community and the internalised interpretation of those realities through people’s experiences and feelings in the process of shifting from rural to urban life.

##### **4.5.1 Research access**

One who has legitimate access could effectively take an outsider and give them the access of an insider (de Laine, 2000, pp.107-108) and this was important for my research in China. Before getting in touch with interviewees, I obtained permissions from gatekeepers - the approval of local government. As residents were in charge of the committee of the community, approval from local government was critical for my fieldwork. The government authorised my empirical work and promised to provide necessary help for me to complete my research. It appeared that, in China, doing fieldwork on community construction was not very common. When I went back to China, I contacted the government directly myself. There is a committee in the current settlement that is responsible for managing and leading

community affairs. This community committee was comprised of several cadres. I approached the leader (the secretary of the committee of the Communist Party in this community) to explain my status as a researcher and my intention of conducting interviews for my work. I also provided formal identification documents (My student ID of University of Liverpool; The document from Chinese scholarship council; My citizen ID and passport) to the local government leader.

In addition, several researchers point out that *guanxi* (the personal relationship) is a vital element in Chinese society (Xin & Pearce, 1996; Park & Luo, 2001). In the case of this research, my *guanxi* (existing personal acquaintance with people in the newly-constructed community) simplified the initial process of getting access to the newly-constructed community. Although most interviewees did not request the documents that the cadres asked for, I showed full identification at the beginning of interviews, which included local approval document, my student ID card and the formal letter of reference (research ethics approval) from the department in the University of Liverpool, together with Chinese translations. This, to a large degree, eased the doubts and uncertainties of the interviewees with regard to the researcher as an outsider. For example, during my fieldwork, for some people, matters of land compensation and land expropriation were very sensitive and comprised a private issue that cannot easily be shared with outsiders.

#### 4.5.2 Participants

In qualitative research, sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research. Sampling must be able to reflect the phenomenon through deep, broad and multilevel data (Hu, 1996, pp.102-104). Although some scholars articulate theoretical sampling from different angles (Glaser, 1978; Sandelowski et al., 1992; Becker, 1993; Coyne, 1997), purposeful sampling seemed appropriate to my research, for all types of sampling in qualitative research can be termed purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Furthermore, purposeful sampling can be used to determine a reasonable sample size, depending on preconceived, dimensions by selecting people, places and events that can provide the most useful information for the research (Patton, 1990). This is also supported by Morse, who states that a more narrow or focused sample is preferred (Morse, 1998).

The selection of participants needs to serve for the emergence of hypotheses and theoretical completeness (Baker *et al.*, 1992). That is to say, participants must have experiences to serve the research interest. Otherwise, if an individual has no experience of the social process, they cannot comment usefully on it or provide perspectives. Since the research aim was to explore community change under community construction, my research focused on residents who have experienced the construction process. Thus participants were selected from the four villages that moved to the newly-constructed community. Specifically, I used three criteria for the selection of participants to make sure that they could provide relevant data.

#### *Residents of the original four villages*

I selected the participants who come from the four villages that merged into the new community, which excluded the outsiders who are living in the community but have no experiences regarding the process of community construction.

#### *Aged between 28 and 60*

Participants' opinions and experiences of the transitional age and the whole process of community construction were necessary for the research. If participants were too young, they may not have memories of the old residences. As such, I chose those participants who were at least 20 when the new 'community' started to be constructed (2008, approximately). I chose 60 as the maximum current age for 3 reasons: the legal age of retirement in China, for females and males are 55 and 60 respectively. Thus in this research age 60 was mainly set for employees who were employed by companies and cadres of the community and local governments; residents at the range of 28 to 60 were the main labour force within families and they would have played important roles in social life, community activities, as well as in their family affairs; I needed to recruit participants who were able to express their feelings/experiences about community construction, thus the age range was also decided due to the convenience of communication and recruitment, which was also advised by the community leader. However, this research did not deny the experiences of those residents above 60 that could be valuable in analysing community affairs, for example in ritualised life and clans.

### *The consideration of identity*

It is understood that identity plays an important role in people's cognition (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011, p.217; Sarat, 2000, pp.163-165; Taylor, 1994, p.25; Hall, 1990). People of different identities played different roles in the community-building process. Accordingly, their feelings and perspectives could be quite different. The interviewees were categorised into two groups: the first consisted of ordinary people, the second of cadres, including cadres from the four original villages. Cadres were members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and could represent the opinions of the government.

#### 4.5.3 Recruitment

Sampling raises the question of how many interviewees are sufficient to construct a theory. There is one applicable principle named 'theoretical saturation' that may be useful in this regard (Glaser & Strauss 1967, pp.61-62). According to grounded theory, interviews and analysis during the whole interview process are inseparable. After every interview the researcher should carry out a real-time analysis of data, and based on the analysis, construct theoretical assumptions and then, based on these theoretical assumptions, continue interviews to make further verification and revision to the theoretical assumptions. The researcher continues selecting interviewees until they find that the information obtained begins to repeat and no more new or important information is generated to clarify the concepts, categories or constructed theory. Owing to the large scale of the population concentrated in the new settlement, it was impossible to interview all the relevant people. Thus, according to the arguments above, in the preliminary plan, I did not set limits to the amount of interviews for this reason. At least ten participants from every village (five female, five male) were invited to take part in the study and the total number of interviewees in the plan was 40.

I depended on the community committee to help me to recruit residents. There was a 'residents' information handbook' held by the committee which includes the basic information of residents (age, gender, phone number and so on). I asked for help from the secretary of the committee of the Communist Party to provide necessary information based on the criteria I had for participants and finally I got

help from one cadre who was responsible for managing residents' daily affairs. To avoid creating the impression that the interviews were compulsory assignments, after getting the information I contacted the participants directly. I explained the research clearly to them to make sure they understood. I also gave them time to think about participating. The snowball method was used in only few cases, and in this method, once a few participants are identified, they are asked to help identify and recruit other informants (Babbie, 2004, p.184). Because the experiences of relocation were similar among residents, the danger of interviewing only people that share the same views has little influence on the validity of data. The recruitment of cadres was smoothly processed on the basis of good communications with the community committee and the secretary. The leader did not set restrictions but he did give the researcher some advice for the recruitment of interviewees. In particular, contact with most cadres was arranged by the community committee and a few of them volunteered to participate in my research, including the leader himself.

The interviews were conducted between April and July, 2015 with residents who have been relocated from the old villages to the newly-constructed community. During my fieldwork in the new settlement, I interviewed 38 residents, of which 32 are presented in this research. Those 6 interviews were abandoned, partly because the time for some interviews was too short and not much data could be gained. Several interviews were interrupted by participants' personal affairs and thus were not complete. The average age of interviewees was fifty-six. Of the interviewees, 9 were female and the rest were male (Table 4-2, 4-3 show the details of participants). The gender imbalance can be clearly seen. At least in the recruitment, male residents showed more willingness of participation than women. The reason could be attributed to China's traditional value of females' work within the family (as introduced in Chapter Five). This could mean that women were less willing to deal with affairs outside the family (Xu, 2004, p.211), participating in interviews could be regarded as one aspect of this tradition.

All interviews were recorded by a voice recorder and I was able to record approximately thirty hours of conversations from those interviews. Interviews were carried out in an informal way. Generally, interviews were conducted individually: the form of whole family interviews was used in rare cases which were dependent on

the specific situation when making appointment with the participants. Sites were decided by residents based on convenience. Typically, interviews were conducted in public squares, cadres' offices, the spaces both in the old places of villages and the new settlement. A small number of interviewees invited me to their own home.

Table 4-2 The demographic characteristics and details of participants

Demographic categories		Number
Age	28-45	5
	46-60	27
Gender	Male	23
	Female	9

Table 4-3 Distribution of participants

Table 4-3 Distribution of participants		Number
Village 1		8
Village 2		9
Village 3		6
Village 4		9
Identity of participants	Cadres	6
	Ordinary	26

#### 4.5.4 Key interview themes

Interviews were conducted to explore residents' sense of well-being, their experiences of being dis-embedded from the land and relocated to the newly-constructed community, and other feelings relating to the transformations caused by

community construction. However, in the process of arriving at an understanding of community construction, some points are worth noting. For instance, the terms village, *xiaoqu* (小区) and community were often utilised interchangeably by residents, or within policy and community construction practice discourses. Therefore, I avoided imposing a particular definition of community during the interviews. Instead, I explored the meanings and understandings respondents associated with the term. Sometimes residents were cautious about voicing criticisms of community construction and the government, in issues regarding land compensation, for example. However, thanks to the preparations I made before the fieldwork, such as the local approval for my research, the key themes of interviews below, and knowledge of the history of community construction in the case study area I gained from relevant documents, enabled me to conduct the interviews smoothly. Questions and concerns around the above issues helped to guide the conversation during semi-structured interviews. In particular, in interviews with respondents I sought to find answers to questions in accordance with the key themes of the interviews:

1. Resident's decision-making processes during and after community construction;
2. Social cohesion and social networks, including consanguinity and geographical considerations;
3. Community activities before and after community construction;
4. Traditions and rituals in the old villages and newly-constructed community.

The main purpose of interviews was to investigate the perception of community after residents have settled in the new settlement for several years. The interviews provided me with significant insights through conversations with interviewees and their personal narratives of the experience of community and community construction. Overall, by revealing residents' feelings and experiences, combined with their memories of old villages, this study offers the potential to examine an integral community construction case. Issues regarding the methodological approach not only relate to assure the integrity of the research process, but include data analysis as follows.

#### **4.6 The analysis**

Data analysis is one of the most important steps that serve the aim of understanding the complexities we seek to illuminate (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In addition, data analysis is not a simple counting and descriptive process and the theory should never just be put together (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.41). In order to reconstruct the reality from which the data was gathered, grounded theory was judged both necessary and suitable for the analysis. Although there are pre-existing theoretical models, this research did not depend on pre-set theoretical hypotheses; by contrast, the theory was established in a delicate and careful induction process. By this process, I moved from data to theory (Bulmer, 1979).

The documentary research provided the background data, motivation and the purpose of community construction. They were valuable for developing a deeper understanding of the research aim and had relatively strong authenticity and validity, which has had facilitated my observation and semi-structured interviews during the empirical work. In the analysis of the change in different aspects of community construction from old villages to the newly-constructed settlement, the documentary research also provided helpful references.

This research was particularly interested in identifying the ways in which community construction affected the communal life of residents in the new settlement. The essence of the interlocking relationship between the categories will be covered by the theories to be studied, which lies in the theoretical description of the nature and significance of phenomenon to construct theory. In this research, findings were mainly drawing on the data generated from interviews and as previously referenced, the development of theory was based on data systematically analysed by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Grounded theory is grounded in the collected data that emphasises the development of theory and the constant inter-plays between analysis and data (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p.65). Put another way, grounded theory requests a process of constructing theory by constant comparison, thinking, analysis, and converting of data into concepts (Layder, D. 1983, p.113), which is 'about the process of researching through learning in the process of carrying out the research' (Freshwater, 1998, p.29). Grounded



theory allows theories to be developed organically and help researcher be open and receptive to new and novel data (Bryant & Chatrmaz, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory focuses on the analysis of the social process (Glaser, 1978, p.109; Glaser & Holton, 2005), and the goal of grounded theory is to explore social processes which can be presented by human interactions (Hutchinson, 1993). Specifically, grounded theory has been chosen because it offers a distinctive way to explore the social world (Kinach, 2006), which is considered suitable for the study of individual, interpersonal relationships and the interactions between individuals and the larger reciprocity of social processes (Charmaz, 1995, pp.28-29). Community construction was explored as a social process involving movement from rural villages to an urban environment with great transformations (see Chapter Three), within which data could be gathered from people's expressions and interactions to reflect the transformation of community.

More importantly, grounded theory is committed to the development of new theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the exploration of the new understandings of phenomena (Chen, 1999). Therefore, grounded theory is especially suitable for a research field lacking theoretical explanations or where existing theoretical explanations are insufficient. That is to say, compared with clearly defined social problems, grounded theory research is more appropriate for flexible research questions where extant theoretical explanation is insufficient. As stated in Chapter Three, community construction was usually explained by an analysis of macro level policy interventions, but neglected the intersubjective experiences of residents and the effect community construction has had on these. Therefore, grounded theory is appropriate for efforts to 'understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience' (Suddaby, 2006, p.634) and is best suited for this research. Generally, the analysis followed the procedure of coding proposed by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), namely the procedures of 'Open Coding', 'Axial Coding' and 'Selective Coding' (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

During the analysis, I read through the transcripts (in Chinese) a number of times and tried to view all as data (Strauss, 1987, p.29). I focused on the relations, activities and local events of residents and aimed to find how they could be grouped

and categorised. Next, these categories were coded in order to arrive at themes (Layder, 1983, ch.7). Then, variables attached to themes of community construction were marked according to the codes previously identified. Lastly, themes were presented separately and compared (see Table 4-4) and then were classified into three empirical chapters: changes of social networks, physical circumstances and its influences and culture and traditions. The triple coding process was embodied in three stages, but in the actual process of analysis I had to continually move back and forth between the various stages to make connections. In addition, there were themes which were interwoven that have been noted in the analytical chapters as well. All in all, the analysis process was faithful to the data, revealed categories and identified the nature and dimension of the categories (Strauss, 1987).

Table 4-4 Coding process

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Land expropriation and compensation		
Residents' alliances	<i>Informal relations</i>	
Upgraded living conditions		
Utilitarian marriages	<i>Formal relations</i>	Interpersonal relations
Cadres' role		during community construction
New lifestyles	<i>Family relations</i>	
Community property management		
Employment		
Families		
Relocation		
Local roots		
Place identity	<i>Place attachment</i>	
Certificate of property right		Physical circumstances

Houses	<i>Private spaces</i>	and community construction
Home		
Neighbourhood	<i>Public spaces</i>	
Community activities		
<hr/>		
Religions		
Change of sacred sites	<i>Rural religions</i>	Traditional elements and
Issues of tombs	<i>Performance of Clans</i>	Cultural events
Clans	<i>Ritualised life</i>	
Weddings		

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## Conclusion

Case study was identified as an appropriate method for investigating community by way of community construction in this study. Case study provided a large degree of flexibility and enabled the investigation to explore a Chinese case of community construction to gain as much data as possible. It also enabled the study to strike a balance between the mixed-methods of data collection from various sources. Empirical data was collected from a newly-constructed community that was integrated from four villages in China. This newly-constructed community has its own characteristics but is also a typical case of community construction, thus was identified suitable to serve the research aims.

Methods of data collection and steps of data analysis adopted by this research conformed to the meaning of qualitative inquiry, wherein researchers interacted with researched subjects naturally, and based on the original data, constructed theory or research results (Wildavsky, 1992, p.21). Specifically, documentary research provided much relevant information about community construction, which was also useful in the analysis. Observation was used as a complementary method to understand residents' communal lives in the new settlement. Semi-structured interview was the main method of data collection for this research, and from which,

the experiences of residents with respect to community construction and the new 'community' were explored. Overall, the empirical data gained from the fieldwork covered the transformations of communal lives in both old villages and the new settlement, and drawn on which, empirical findings provided the basis to assess whether the new settlement has been constructed as a 'community'. Construction of a theory of community construction then would finally be achieved by the analysis - which will be following in the next four chapters.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Interpersonal relations during community construction:**

#### **Transformations and new situations**

##### **Introduction**

The specificities and context of community construction, with regards to the newly-constructed ‘community’, have been outlined in chapters two, three and four. The reviews in previous chapters have raised reservations over the effect of community construction as a community-builder and its commitment to the newly-constructed ‘community’. Primary ties were regarded as fundamental factors of community structure (Wellman & Leighton, 1979; Wellman, 1979), and taking the perspective of which, this first empirical chapter focuses explicitly on changing interpersonal relations through the experiences and feelings of the residents to examine community building by way of community construction.

The findings presented in this chapter focus on the transformation of social ties in the shift from rural villages to the newly-constructed community. To investigate the transformations, this chapter starts by addressing the research question with regards to residents’ understanding and experience of land expropriation, which was both the starting point and inducement for community construction. After a brief introduction to residents’ perceptions of being separated from the land, the changes in residents’ lives provided the context within which the transformations in informal relations, formal relations and family structures in the new settlement are discussed. Additionally, the extent to which the changes in interpersonal relations contributed to, or otherwise damaged the construction of a community is also considered. Addressing the transformation of interpersonal relations is mediated by a range of community experiences and residents’ activities. These experiences and activities were simultaneously embedded into residents’ daily lives and interwoven with the shift from rural to urban settlement.

##### **5.1 Community construction by land expropriation**

It has been argued that governments are the only buyers and sellers in the land market due to the current land system in China; the government can legally

expropriate land in ‘the public interest’ (see chapters two and three). The farmland in the old villages was requisitioned ‘in the public interest’, so that stadiums and supporting facilities for the national Olympic Games could be constructed. Under this circumstance, land, which was long held by village collectives, became the source of change.

The land-use changes in the community investigated were mainly driven by political power transforming the old villages along a wave of urbanisation. The cadres (represented by C) and residents (represented by R) in this research (see discussions in Chapter Four) could have different cognitions of community construction from start to end. As cadres generally occupied higher administrative positions in community affairs, from their direct descriptions and understandings with regard to community construction, generally and officially it seems that they represent the government’s views on community construction: they are relatively careful but positive descriptions. Here are some cadres’ opinions with regard to community construction and urbanisation in this case:

*(C, male, 50): ‘whether here has achieved urbanisation or not, I dare not to say. But if you take a look at the new infrastructure of the newly-constructed community, you can see this has been absolutely improved over our previous rural life, especially living conditions; but in terms of community, I do not admit’.*

*(C, male, 56): ‘after community construction, our residents are still farmers/villagers. In terms of urbanisation, I don’t think urbanisation has much significance...like the residents now, from rural villages to the new high-rise buildings [called shanglou 上楼 in Chinese, namely ‘go upstairs’, living in high-rise buildings], there are certainly some changes, but, as to how much, that’s hard to say.’*

Compared to the old villages, physical infrastructure in the newly-constructed community has been upgraded. Villagers were entitled to six-storey high-rise buildings and all families are living in modern detached houses now, which present a sharp contrast to the low and dilapidated houses/bungalows they had previously. It cannot be denied that infrastructure is one of the key differentiating factors in explaining rural development in China, as residents and researchers have recognised (Camarinha-Matos & Afsarmanesh, 2002; Paine, 1980; Altman, 1995). In contrast to

cadres' opinions, in spite of the upgraded physical conditions, some residents expressed that the new and improved settlement is not what they really want. From the upgrading of houses to the new lives in the new settlement, compared to the old villages, their responses included:

*(R, male, 60): 'I cannot afford to live in a bungalow so I have to live in the high-rise buildings [irony]. Bungalows are where rich people live. The higher living, the poorer come afterwards. You should remember this: in the original time, it was better to live in high-rise buildings, but it is reversed now'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'it is community construction that drive us away from the old villages, and that's why we are living here'.*

*(R, male, 58): 'after community construction, to live in a high-rise building is secondary; the key thing is that you must have a job. If you don't have social security, you cannot take the grains either to the upstairs after harvest [means, if you don't have land, you have to find a job]'.*

Compared with the responses of the cadres, community construction in residents' eyes is problematic. China's urban-rural dualistic system means that rural farmers have to rely on village collectives for public goods and services (Eyferth *et al.*, 2003, pp.5-7; Chan & Buckingham, 2008, pp.590-591), because farmers depend heavily on the land which is controlled by village collectives. The land in rural China is never merely related to livelihood; it also contributes substantially to a self-provided social welfare system (which has also been mentioned in Chapter Two). Therefore, it is not surprising that residents would consider carefully before moving to a new settlement and paying the price of losing land, as one resident expressed:

*(R, male, 60): 'of course, with land we can produce grain by ourselves, the key is that we don't need to spend money to buy..., we can achieve self-sufficiency'.*

Basically, by looking directly at land issues, community construction is problematic for respondents and the disputes indicated above provide the context within which the transformation of interpersonal relations during community construction must be considered. On one side, interpersonal relations are critical in explaining the disputes of land expropriation and community construction introduced

above; on the other side, interpersonal relations, a basic element in residents' daily lives, could develop closely alongside the process of community construction on the formal, informal and familial level. Now, the discussions will turn to residents' interpersonal relations during community construction to explore the changes.

## **5.2 Community as interpersonal relations during community construction**

Before and after community construction, residents were bound by a range of social relationships and interactions with peers, cadres, families and neighbours, which are variously identified as crucial to what they viewed as comprising their new 'community'. Analysis of interpersonal relations during community construction will be unfolded successively from informal relations, formal relations and family relations to discuss the transformations.

### **5.2.1 The disrupted informal interpersonal relations**

'Informal relations' here is used distinctly from formal relations that centred around cadres. Informal relations were the basic ties of residents' lives and loose links among residents. Residents emphasised the importance of informal relationships with respect to their daily lives, which were likely to comprise and impact their communal experiences in the old villages and newly-constructed settlement. The utility of investigating the change of informal relations in the process of community construction is to find and explain the transformation of basic social ties among residents.

#### *A. Informal alliances among neighbourhoods and peers*

Here the discussion focuses on exploring the informal alliance among residents at the beginning of community construction, and specifically on the issues of demolition and relocation. Residents responded that, in the beginning, they and their neighbours/peers were brought closer together to resist relocation, which was a kind of informal alliance. Empirical evidence shows that the government disintegrated these alliances easily with the temptation of money. Typical responses in this context included:

*I: Did the government propagandise for the movement to the new community?*



(R, male, 52): *'they did. Deceptive government. We don't want to move, nobody wants to move', 'at the start, they [the government] said, if you move to the new place, if you move as the earlier groups, you can get 3000 yuan. Sooner or later you have to move, so it is better to move earlier to get the reward.'* *'Some residents who didn't want to move firstly, when they are tempted by money, they moved. The left residents cannot maintain too long'.*

(R, male, 32): *'I didn't have willingness to move at first, when the government gives you some money to let you move first, then the remaining two or three families cannot resist anymore.'*

This unstable alliance among residents implies that community construction undermines the solidarity based on familiarity that developed in the old villages over the years, allowing an individual self-interest oriented trend of interpersonal relations to emerge. More importantly, the relationships they had established in the old villages could influence the new social ties in the newly-constructed community. Drawing on these changes, the reproduction of solidarity is questionable in the new settlement. Thus, even if residents consider their relationships with their neighbours/peers to be of great importance, there could be some reservations in their minds when facing similar situations in the new settlement.

#### *B. Distanced living conditions and potential for estrangement*

After moving to the new urban settlement, residents developed their interactions and interpersonal relations on the basis of their new circumstances. Rural Chinese relations are psychological rather than structural, which means that rural residents' social relations are relative weak, informal and without institutional infrastructure (Chen *et al.*, 2000, p.61; Gold, 1985, p.672; Xu *et al.*, 2010, pp.259-271). Therefore, in a transitional process taken by community construction, social relations were easily affected by the change of physical existence, which is mainly reflected in the potential estrangement and decay of familiarity among residents. In other words, after community construction the upgraded living conditions could be problematic in residents' daily reconnections. Typical explanations regarding residents' communications and estrangement based on physical changes are demonstrated in the following extracts:

(R, male, 58): *'I know other residents; we are all from the same village, and can't we know each other? But the youngsters in your age, I cannot recognise them. I know residents in the same building, upper storey or lower storey...we are all living in the same place anyway, who lives in which building we all know, one community, sometimes we can meet each other'... 'there is a contact book in the collective committee when we select our houses, you can find anyone'.*

(R, male, 60): *'it is all different to the old village. We are all living in high-rise buildings now, you can still find them, you can call them out, appoint a place together, and we all come out to meet each other'.*

The distance of residents' communications in the new settlement has been extended by the upgraded living conditions. In addition, in order to earn money, residents try to rent vacant houses without considering the following consequences: alienation brought about by outsiders. However, interviewees are more likely to prioritise relationships with locals in the new community. Some illustrative responses are:

(R, male, 36): *'some people rent houses here. That is to say, they are working here, leave in the morning and come back in the evening; there could be no social bonds, outside renters...if you have belonging to your community, I think you should buy a house there first, you have your own house, and this is also just possible to generate cohesion; even if on the weekend, such as the renters of my house, they don't develop neighbourhood relations, they could just go to meet their friends but they don't participate in community activities'.*

(R, male, 56): *'talking to renters? No, it is not working. Living here, if you talk to somebody, you have same topics with people of this side [local people], but with that side [outside renters], you don't have much to talk about'.*

In addition to estrangement based on physical changes and the increase of outsiders, typical explanations of the impact of community construction on familiarity among peers that were considered so important included:

(R, female, 58): *'there will be more alienation in the future. I am living here, if we live in the same building, we can have a chance to meet each other, but only few times you can meet them, but if not, you don't know me, I don't know you'.*

(R, female, 35): *'we can get familiar with each other over a long time, but not like before...we are living in the high-rise buildings now, close the door, nobody comes out, nobody cares about others. In the evening, when you come out, you can meet and then have a chat. Like the next generation they don't go out very often, they don't have chances to know each other...and it will become the same as in the city, you don't even know the people who are living opposite your house, and when we are living in the high buildings, we don't have much willingness to come out after meals'.*

From residents' responses, we can clearly see the potential for estrangement and decay of familiarity, which was not only caused by the changed living conditions described above, but also by the loss of solidarity inherent in the old villages and the time needed to adapt to a new life in a new environment. Overall, it shows a trend of alienation in residents' informal interpersonal relations during community construction.

### *C. Utilitarian marriages and the decay of ethical power*

As mentioned in Chapter Two, in rural villages and communities, ethical power is traditional and conventional that closely related with social relations (a differential mode of association, *Chaxugeju*). Ethical power is on the basis of 'the morality of personal relations' (Fei, 1992, p.74) and it is actually a part of *Guiju* ('norms of the society', Fei, 1947, p.3). As such, standard behaviours are expected by the community members according to the social norms (Nee & Ingram, 1998, pp.24-28). Although in rural villages ethical power did not have compulsory restraints, during community construction, a couple's marriage can reflect the transformation of social behaviours and the further impact on social norms, which is closely related to individuals' interpersonal relations at the community level.

Access to land compensation and community services was determined by whether one was an original villager which links up with land rights, and household registration was the basis according to which land compensation was distributed in

community construction. It means that qualifications for land compensation not only refer to community residence defined by a territorial boundary. But, most importantly, it refers to local household registration in the old villages. Generally, when getting married, people get the chance to change their household registration to their wife/husband's place of residence (generally women follow men's residence).

In this context, usually in the case of women, the status of villager is lost if she marries a non-resident in another village and they typically become 'outsiders' because another household made the investment (Wolf, 1985): generally in the form of providing land rights in the new marriage. In order to share the land compensation, however, some women chose to stay while bringing her husband in. In addition, some villagers chose to make a 'fake marriage' with outsiders to get land compensation. Overall, apart from locals, a villager status, or a qualification of land compensation could also be obtained by marrying a villager, thus being recognised as a community member to share the land right which was materialised by money and a house. The respondents provided evidence for both marrying-in and fake marriages:

*(R, male, 58): 'community construction is a development, who else doesn't want to get his household registration back to the old village?'*

***I: can you get the permission of the village?***

*'you bribe them, they will give you permission...just take the girls as an example, when she got married, she not only would not leave but also brought her husband in, he is not even an endowment son-in-law'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'some bribed the cadres, divorced, divorced from his wife, then got married with the other person who will give him 50 thousand yuan, then the person will get compensation, and when [she] got the household registration, they divorced again. It is simply aimed at earning the compensation'.*

Marriages have been utilised in this case by residents as a way to satisfy real-time exchange of interests. This utilitarian marriage was actually regarded as 'deviant behaviours' (Cohen, 1968, p.148) by residents and violated the normative rules of ethical system and social norms - they were unconventional. However, this

phenomenon just became one of the residents' daily topics of gossip. Typical comments about fake marriage included:

*(R, male, 36): 'it can only be said that, in terms of fake marriage, chaos, there is no ethical system that constrains everyone...the elders still follow the system of collectivism, and youngsters, they have consciousness of right and obligations, but in reality, it is very confused'.*

In the old villages, community was a moral resource in discouraging improper personal behaviours (Hudson, 2003, p.84) but it did not possess the power to prevent these fake-marriage phenomena. To sum up, it can be argued that when in the conflict between public interest and private spheres in the process of community construction, especially in preventing public interests being impaired by interpersonal relations, the ethical system is useless.

In describing their relations with others from the three aspects above, it appears that, for the interviewees, community is very closely tied to informal relationships. The majority of the residents interviewed asserted that informal relations were an important element within their lives. However, solidarity and familiarity seemed to be undermined during community construction. Ethical systems that maintained interpersonal relations in the old villages have declined as well. As such, the informal channels through which residents could gain social support become less effective than in the past. Since clues of formal relations as a source of social support that centred on cadres' status are also found in residents' responses regarding informal relations, in the next section, the discussion will be reoriented from an individualistic perspective that views interpersonal relations as loose links to formal relations that focus on the practical operation of social networks.

### 5.2.2 Formal relations: reliance and oscillation

Issues of residents' formal relations will be illustrated by cadres' roles during community construction, mainly pertaining to land issues. By analysing the links between cadres' role and residents' daily lives, the main beneficiaries with respect to formal relations during community construction will be highlighted and revealed. Another goal of this study is to establish what social and economic determinants were essential to the formal relations taken by residents.

### *A. Cadres in land expropriation and land compensation*

According to Coase (2013) and Bates (2007), what kind of group can organise politically and obtain the power to define property rights is critical, rather than any property right itself. Obviously, as previously argued, it is governments that control the conversion from farmland to non-agricultural uses in China and local governments become the only buyers and sellers in the land market; unquestionably, this has brought about many problems. However, this research will focus on the interactions of residents and cadres in land expropriation, rather than the relations between local governments and village collectives. This is because, firstly, the local governments' opinion would be reflected by cadres' decisions. This is due to the fact that as CPC (Chinese Communist Party) members, when facing pressures from the upper government, cadres generally do not have much willingness or power to resist. Secondly, the cadres were not only representatives of village collectives in negotiating land expropriation with local governments but also members of the involved villages. This means that land expropriation involved the interests of village collectives as well as their own interests - through this, villagers' opinion would be reflected.

Some respondents expressed their ideas about land requisition that are helpful to understanding the land issue related to formal relations more directly. Residents have clear perceptions of the fact of losing land by way of land expropriation, for example:

*(R, male, 44): 'as you know, since 2006, the land was all requisitioned',*

***I: but how did that happen?***

*'that is, one village, for example my village, the land belongs to my village, they [the government] calculated the total mu [亩 A Chinese unit of land, 1 mu equates 666.666 m<sup>2</sup>], and then requisitioned'.*

***I: Have the government sought residents' opinions?***

*'do you think that the voices of residents are still meaningful now? Don't you see the people outside the municipal government, those people have petitions for land and want to sue, and do they care?'*

Empirical evidence from other respondents support that the land issue is more directly reflected by the price gap between the villages' request and local governments' standard, which has become one of the sources of residents' dissatisfaction. For example:

*(R, male, 60): 'The land is all constructed as roads...The government build a new building, the requisitioned land was sold for 4600 thousand yuan per mu 亩, but we [the village] only get 1300 thousand yuan per mu...corruption'.*

The price of land, as Cai (2003, pp.666-672) summarised, is state-regulated but likely to be negotiated between cadres and the government. Typical responses included:

*(R, male, 36): 'now the requisition of land could be seen as a kind of exploitation...the government just compensates you with some money, symbolically, takes your land and sells it at a higher price'.*

*(R, male, 57): 'the land was collective-owned before, but after the land requisition, it became state-owned land, and the government benefited from the land requisition [because of the appreciation of land]'.*

Rent seeking behaviour by rural cadres (Brandt *et al.*, 2002) in community construction is evident, and cadres tend to exploit economic gains, since they controlled the conversion from collective-owned to public-needed land uses (Nee, 1992, pp.1-5). However, in the cadres' eyes, land requisition was explained by their status and obedience to policy, so that land requisition seems more understandable from their side. For example:

*(C, male, 50): 'it could be said like this, because it is the policy from upper government, and on one hand, we should take the national games into consideration, we made great sacrifice; in addition, as you know, we are communist party members, of course we should listen to the communist party's command'.*

*(C, female, 31): 'land requisition, at least the propaganda and mobilisation conformed to the laws and institutions are lawful'.*

Land compensation is the other field that can reflect cadres' roles most evidently. Typical responses included:

*(R, male, 32): 'redistributing money is totally decided by the village committee, we don't know [how], how much we can get is unknown, all the information we get is from them [cadres]...you can just compare the money we get to the other villages, then you can know'.*

*(R, male, 58): 'the previous secretary has been arrested [because of corruption], and this one could be arrested soon...they should be shot...130 thousand yuan per mu, but as far as I know, the compensation from the upper government is at least 170 thousand yuan, where did the 40 thousand yuan go?'*

Respondents provided further support for the proposition that cadres were in charge of the distribution of the massive compensations gained from land expropriation (Birney, 2014, pp.55-67). The results also show that rural cadres might use their political power to distribute more public resources to their households or leverage their political power for better access to administrative processes to enhance their household income.

The phenomena above could be explained, on one hand, by rural cadres in China not counting as official government employees, but holding political and administrative power in local villages, and so having the power basis for rent-seeking. On the other hand, with fixed tenure of administrative positions, rural cadres have strong incentives to maximise their household income during their tenures (Kung *et al.*, 2009, pp.64-65; Oi & Rozelle, 2000, p.539). In the case of community construction, some cadres would prioritise family income over community affairs. Studies show that the cadre's position may bring 10 percent higher income than non-cadre households on a per capita basis, and cadre households lose the economic gains immediately when they lose their cadre status (Jin *et al.*, 2014, p.197).

However, it is necessary to take into account the dominating position of the cadres and government within community construction in China. The residents have



no choice but to depend on the Communist Party of China and its representatives - the cadres - for the process of building in the new settlement. As such, getting cadres to accept responsibility for their involvement in community affairs is a crucial aspect of community construction, particularly for ensuring their credibility with public affairs. From the interviews, most of the cadres interviewed reported that the cadres played important roles in community construction, and a few residents provided similar ideas. Typical expressions are:

*(C, male, 55): 'most affairs are led by cadres, property management is supported by cadres, and [they are] serving residents...if you let outsiders do this business, the residents could have disagreements, and sometimes you cannot let them pay fees'.*

*(C, male, 53): 'community construction, firstly, you must have money; secondly, you must have people [relations], the people here are not only the concrete people. Community construction is not only a problem for cadres, but the cadre's role is critical; they can arrange all these things'.*

Indeed, in contrast to the cadres who considered their performance to have made a significant difference in leading community construction, the majority of respondents did not believe cadres have done many useful things for the construction of a new 'community'. There are also several interviewees who identified cadres as their most important resources, but were critical of cadres and cadres' bad reputation. For example:

*(R, male, 58): 'the village affairs are so complicated, even the local cadres cannot handle it. Sometimes cadres should use their networks in the village [to achieve the community construction goal]. In the committee, the secretary controls everything, the vice secretary is nothing'.*

Most interviewees made criticisms of the cadres' involvement in the specific affairs of community construction. Residents' dissatisfaction with cadres' accountability appeared to be especially due to cadres' unlimited choices, resources and opportunities. For example:

*(R, male, 57): 'it all depends on the cadres' personality, how much they care about the residents, the more, the fewer residents suffer. But if they think they would just have a 5 year tenure thus want to earn more, then the villagers will have a hard time'.*

Certainly, the cadres did not admit to taking personal advantage in respect to these priorities. To recap, it seems that in what Walder (1988) calls 'organised dependency' that residents' autonomy from old village collectives have not improved. On one hand, residents voice criticism of the cadres, yet they are entirely dependent upon them.

### *B. Generalised reciprocity and formal relations*

In addition to seeking the favour of cadres' households themselves, there are numerous research studies with respect to the cadres' practical application of power by their social networks. Generalised reciprocity refers to 'mutual trust and commitment among interrelated actors that are independent of any specific transaction' (Sandefur & Laumann, 1998, p.491). At the core of Coleman's analysis, generalised reciprocity results either from cultural values backed by effective norms or from repeated interactions among the same actors over time (Coleman, 1988, p.S98). Putnam further pointed out that generalised reciprocity is more efficient than specific reciprocity for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter (Putnam, 2001). Social capital is part of a strategy for action in generalised reciprocity and similarly, in the case of community construction, generalised reciprocity centred on cadres and their status was an important source of social capital, which matters for social and economic activities.

Corruption in household registration is a field that can reflect the operation of formal relations. Before 1978 changing household registration was the most difficult thing. In fact, the household registration system is classified into two related parts: residential location and socio-economic eligibility. Its functions go far beyond simply controlling rural-urban migration, and in the eyes of Chinese rural residents, household registration can determine their fates, as it concerns their social status and economic benefits (see chapters two and three). Since community construction occurred in their life, the household registration system significantly affected

personal life in many aspects; for example, direct benefits from land compensation. Household registration could be gained through ‘fake marriage’ and ‘marrying-in’ as introduced above; apart from which, empirical evidence shows that household registrations were sold directly by cadres. For example:

*(R, male, 60): ‘if it was not for community construction, we would not have another 7-800 residents with household registrations...They come to share money and houses’,*

***I: how did this come?***

*‘they bought it’.*

*(R, male, 57): ‘he [the secretary] imports household registrations, 100 household registrations entered our village when he was the secretary. Selling one, he can get 30 thousand yuan. For example, a girl married outward to long distance, or someone divorced, give him thirty thousand and he will guarantee you can get 200 thousand yuan from the compensation.’*

***I: was he willing to do that?***

*‘we are all residents from one village, for example, he has a good relationship with the girl’s father, and he will do it [for the girl]’.*

Generalised reciprocity in community construction was shown by individual’s attempt to gain economic benefits (mainly money) and the social essence of which is centred on formal relations. This is supported by the argument that social networks sometimes effectively act as social approval and companionship mechanisms (Homans, 1974, p.16; Nee & Ingram, 1998, p.28). In the phenomena mentioned above, residents often resorted to their informal relations to achieve their goals, which in this case mean that informal interpersonal relations are often found working through relations centred on cadres’ positions. Lineage networks then matter a great deal, because kinship networks represent a form of social capital that is established ‘for noneconomic purposes, yet with economic consequences’ (Coleman, 1994, p.175). In short, these kinship networks represent a channel residents would

use (in Chinese: to find someone ‘*shuodeshanghua*’ 说得上话, means to have a word with cadres) to gain benefit through cadres’ status.

In addition, generally, Chinese people show special favour and obligation through *guanxi* ties (social relations) (Fei, 1992, pp.123-127) and individuals with high social capital are prepared to act collectively to achieve shared goals (Putnam *et al.* 1994), which typically occurred in the bidding for projects during community construction represented by cadres and their kinship relations. For example:

*(R, male, 57): ‘then, they changed a secretary, who has worked 4 years. Some projects near this new community, you need to bid, he [the secretary] got the bid and gave the project to his nephew, he is bad...some projects near here, the funding he has grafted will be 300 thousand yuan, he would do the business with his nephew’.*

It is clear that kinship ties sometimes enjoy more efficient access to market chances through cadres’ administrative positions. Cadres’ role as redistributors brings in market information and entrepreneurial opportunities by external links to the newly-constructed community. For some residents, depending on the formal relations centred on cadres means an opportunity to improve their quality of life and to engage in a range of economic activities. Thus, addressing links with formal relations was identified as a beneficial aspect by many of the respondents. Typical comments in respect to this included:

*(R, male, 58): ‘now, it is not so easy to find a job, not because you are not capable, the key is that you don’t have social relations. You remember this, the key thing is that you don’t have relations, for example, something in the village is decided internally. If you have key relations, you don’t need to bribe, or walk detours; you can use direct relations to find a job in the new community’.*

*(R, female, 54): ‘they [cadres’ relatives] undertake this big market by contract, by urban management then force the peddlers into it, cheap or expensive, and you have to buy from there’.*

Exceptions are those who do not have strong links in the new ‘community’, or those who are administratively marginalised in formal relations, such as those who are working outside the community most of the time. For example:

(R, male, 59): *'now the villages become communities, has not much benefits for us...nobody is in charge [shuolesuan 说了算], your own business is charged by yourself...what is good is that if you have some complaints about the state and the communist party, you can express, not like before, but not too fierce...we all solve problems by ourselves now rather than depend on them'.*

In short, divorce from land and village collectives results in less support from formal channels for ordinary residents. Along with the transformation of the informal relations as argued before, residents increasingly recognise the importance of family relations in facilitating the development of personal and communal activities. Indeed, in addressing the research questions of this study, the empirical evidence suggests that community construction can make valuable contributions to the analysis of family relations and the new family structure within the new community.

### 5.2.3 Family relations: driving forces and the new situations

After community construction, villages began to undergo what was generally believed to be an irreversible shift from rural to urban community, which could be successful or not in weakening the traditional values of duty and obligation within Chinese families. The importance of familial relationships was identified in interviews with residents, and such relationships were often delineated with reference to the old village context in which they lived before. The discussion will now focus specifically on residents' family lives in order to further explore the research questions with regard to the nature of residents' experiences of employment, family values, obligations and the potential of such experiences to contribute to the construction of a new community.

#### A. *Consumption-oriented change of families*

The calculation of land compensation was based on the number of family members. Specifically with houses, one family member can get 40m<sup>2</sup> (whether young or old), and two members can get an added 20 m<sup>2</sup>. In this case, every family (assuming 4 family members, but generally a family has more than four members) could get at least 200 m<sup>2</sup> floor space (generally they can choose house types from 60 m<sup>2</sup> to 120 m<sup>2</sup>). Instead of depending on agricultural production, empirical evidence shows that almost every family now has an independent and reliable source of

economic income in rental income from the compensation of houses. Typical responses included:

*(R, male, 60): 'we have a demolition agreement with the government, but we don't have a property ownership certificate, you cannot buy a house here even if you have money, no houses available, brothers and fathers-sons hold them, every family is rich, we all rent houses to outsiders...one of my houses, 60 m<sup>2</sup>, one year I can earn 12 thousand yuan<sup>31</sup>'.*

*(R, male, 44): 'our life can depend on renting fees, the most expensive house here can be rented for 1500 yuan per month, and this is much higher than farming. You cannot depend on the compensation only, like me, 50s, I can live a good life with no sickness...the state doesn't care about your living'.*

A house of 60 m<sup>2</sup> can bring in about 1200 *yuan* per month. From the national income investigation of 2015, the annual net income of a rural resident in China is 9892 *yuan* (see the official website of China's State Council)<sup>32</sup>. As such, depending on renting fees, residents in the newly-constructed community still compare very favourably to most of their counterparts without incomes from employment and other economic incomes in most rural communities. In addition, as far as the research investigated, of all the four original villages, the minimum compensation that a village member obtained from land expropriation was 160 thousand *yuan*, and the highest was 400 thousand *yuan*<sup>33</sup>. Thus one family (assuming 4 family members) could get at least 600 thousand *yuan*.

Studies suggest that migrants from rural to urban areas would increase their household's income per capita by 8.5 to 13.1 percent (Du, Park & Wang, 2005, p.688), and on the basis of the above discussion, it can be reasonably inferred that movement from rural to urban life could have brought about more tangible economic benefits for the residents. As such, gaining wealth directly from land compensation could explain the incentives of residents' relocation. However, residents, particularly those aged above 50, who often explained their compensation in terms of money, hold contrary negative attitudes. The following quotations are illustrative:

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<sup>31</sup> *Yuan* 元, China's currency unit, 1 pound  $\approx$  9 *yuan*.

<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.scio.gov.cn/xwfbh/xwfbh/wqfbh/2015/20150120/>.

<sup>33</sup> The difference is determined by how many land of the village has been expropriated.

(R, male, 58): *'this little compensation given by the government cannot last for a long time, 300 thousand yuan for one person with houses...in terms of me, my generation is ok, it can be said like, never get sick'.*

***I: Could the compensation be counted as a small fortune?***

(R, male, 60): *'no, it doesn't count, my generation has enough anyhow, and the next generation, like my grandsons, should work to earn money again'.*

Land compensation points to one critical issue, livelihood in the future. The quotations of worries seen above remind us that the change from rural to urban means not only a change of lifestyles. It can be inferred from participants' responses that residents' worries about the future were not only because of dissatisfactions with the amount of money from land compensation, but under the premise of losing land, money from land compensation cannot be envisaged as a method of earning a living/future-planning by residents. Complaints of residents can be attributed to the pressures of the future livelihoods, especially that most of them were peasants without good skills and experiences working in urban environments. As observed, residents responded about their considerations and own plans for the future:

(R, male, 60): *'we don't know what will happen in the future, we got our land compensation and we saved money in the bank, earned interest, or bought some financial products'.*

(R, male, 57): *'at the beginning of community construction, there was a policy for our four villages, to join the endowment insurance, that is the only chance, it is good, if you joined at that time, now you have an insurance, or you don't, someone regrets not joining the insurance'.*

The economic stress from modern community management and community service in the new settlement was also critical in facilitating the consumption-oriented trend of families. The newly-constructed settlement strengthened its support for the construction of a modern and urban community through a range of urban property management institutions. Modern and urban community management has been a common feature in the lives of many of the residents interviewed. Formal institutions could have a large effect on residents' daily lives, or in other words, after

at least five years, these institutions regarding urban property management should have produced adaptable situations for community residents. However, the investigated situation only covers several residents reporting positive attitudes to the new and modern property management mode. Typical comments are noted below:

*(R, male, 60): 'when you open your eyes, you have to spend money now. If I did farm work in rural villages like before, 20 thousand yuan per year could be ok, but not here...after community construction, you can get two houses, rent one to outsiders, depend on the renting fees, it is not enough, but better than farming...30 thousand yuan per person for consumption cannot be counted as rich here'.*

*(R, female, 58): 'if you have troubles [in your daily life], you can go to ask the property management for help...but accordingly, you have to pay the property management fee'.*

It seems that residents are not accustomed to the new lifestyle that community service needs to be paid. Many residents conceded that pressures from the new urban property management regime featured in their daily economic considerations. Thus in many instances they are at pains to emphasise their preference for old, no-spending lifestyles in the old villages. For example:

*(R, female, 35): 'now most residents come out to find a job, at least they can earn eating money. What else can we do? The money is not enough to spend...300 thousand yuan; it is like, for one generation, generations depend on these three hundred thousand yuan. You can depend on farmland for generations, you have food, now everything needs to spend money, even to drink water you need to pay'.*

Consequently, these residents are yearning for the life attached to land in the past, and they try to discourage the improvements during community construction. Overall, consumption-oriented trend of families was driven by economic pressures from two aspects: modern community management/community service and worries about the future livelihood. The new situation of families has made family members to reconsider their family life, and getting access to the labour market was inevitably faced by residents in this situation.



### *B. Necessity of getting access to the labour market*

Many residents were of the opinion that a reconsideration of their livelihood was essential in the new community because they lacked the minimum guarantee from the farmland which could provide 'self-supplied food grain'. Many residents interviewed considered themselves to have had a fair job. In discussing the merits of their current job, several residents interviewed were appreciative of community construction:

*(R, male, 52): 'we work for the government now, I will retire at 62/3, salary is not high, 1800 per month, but the good thing is that we have five-insurance [indemnificatory treatment as formal workers, who can get pension after retirement]...the road cleaners are all our villagers, that is good, without land at least you still have a job, at that time, when the company recruited workers, our villagers had priority to be recruited'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'I find a job on the road now [road cleaning], they offer social insurance and a housing fund, 2000 yuan and one breakfast per day. The job is relaxed and it is near my home'.*

Just a few residents are living in unemployed households in the new community. For many residents, especially those in their 40s-50s, their employment have remained fairly stable for a period. However, the majority of residents asserted that their work chances have nothing to do with the transformation from rural farmers to urban residents. In other words, community construction did not bring a leap forward for chances of employment in residents' eyes. Typical responses included:

*(R, male, 58): 'without land, I have to work: cleaning, speak directly, we are rubbish-pickers'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'not many people in my village are doing businesses, they are not capable...most of them are employed by public security or sanitation cleaning companies'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'the youngsters buy a car; drive a BMW to do a public security job'.*

(R, male, 59): *'they are not, their jobs are not decent jobs...even those formal citizens have no jobs'*.

Overall, getting access to the labour market was the first step for the maintenance of family existence. Residents cannot be farmers anymore and what they must do was to abandon their old identities and throw themselves into the commodification of labour to find more opportunities.

### *C. The meaning of commodification of labour to the family*

The roles of family members with respect to family lives will be analysed in this part. In the past, for a woman, her task in seeking marriage was to 'find a mother-in-law' (*zhaopojia* 找婆家), and her husband is 'the person inside my home' (*wojialide* 我家里的) (Hinton & Gordon, 1987). These phrases symbolise the traditional location of women's work: inside the house. However, there is clear evidence that women were becoming increasingly involved in the Chinese workforce after the 1990s (Jones, 1993; Riley, 1996, pp.4-5).

Community construction is more likely to bring economic opportunity for family members and to some extent, neglecting the difference of gender. This is because, without agricultural land, households become involved in a wide variety of income-generating activities, and every household member was forced to make contributions to the whole family, which thereby enhances the woman's economic importance to or within the family. Evidence shows that rural women got the chance to earn additional income while also meeting their traditional obligations. For example:

(R, female, 47): *'this work is easy anyway, I am working in the community, it couldn't be more relaxing, working near my home, at 9 am, when I finished my work, wojialide [my husband] will help me to do my work, and he will go to work and I will go home to do my own work'*.

Based on my observations and interviews, cleaning workers for example, are mostly females and local villagers gained the priority to be hired. This reflects the fact that a substantial proportion of the female interviewees started to work outside their families. Employment for these residents was something which occurred with

less traditional confines and influence of family relationships. The majority of respondents considered the long-term and reliable work chances associated with family relationships to be a very important element in their lives. These changes have started to challenge traditional division of labour between men and women in families because of the increased economic value of women and to some extent, some women even expressed that they could leave the domestic tasks to other family members. This is a relief for women, thus, it is of no surprise that the majority of the female residents interviewed variously described their roles in families in wholly positive terms, such as 'well-off' 'happiness' and 'good'. Typical responses are:

*(R, female, 47): 'work is not very hard, I have only worked here for one year, my husband is working in a greening team, the same system, we can communicate and our life is leisurely and fairly well-off'.*

*(R, female, 54): 'good, only if you want, you can have a job, to earn some money for your family, to share some of the burden, not like in the old villages, only focusing on farmland'.*

The Chinese traditional familial values seem to be persisting (Whyte, 1995, pp.1002-1005; 1996, p.9) and women in the new community were not absolutely divorced from traditional familial values. However, a new family situation and the necessity of commodification of labour challenged the role of family members, leading to the erosion of Chinese traditional familial values and supplanting them by this new economic family model. However, it is more likely that it is not community construction that has made women more active in economic activities, but the practical needs of family development did. The factors of gender and labour were important to the development of effective strategies to address the new family structures.

In order to further analyse the new situation of families comprehensively, the research focuses on the responsibilities and obligations of family members to illuminate the roles of the factors above in shaping family relations. Such considerations present a number of issues in this subsection - including independent trends of families, clearly-delineated lifestyles of family members and the decline of

obligations, which may undermine families' roles in respect to maintaining links within the new community.

#### *D. An independent trend*

The reasons why families become independent in the new settlement can be understood in the following respects. Firstly, in part as a consequence of China's population policy and the 'one-child policy', families in China had fewer members, which generated smaller and 'older' families in China (Guo, Goldstein & Goldstein, 1996). It also should be taken into consideration that China's single children may grow up to be individualistic and selfish as a result of this policy when analysing family divisions (Jing & Zhang, 1998, p.273). In addition, in the newly-constructed community, individuals get rid of most social categories compared to the old villages, the village collectives, for example (Beck, 1992, p.90), which also provided a context for independent families.

Family's division is called *fenjia* 分家 in China. In addition to the family fortune needs be redistributed, *fenjia* means family members will live separately (which generally means parents and their children who have married will not live in the same house). Such findings were reflected in the links between family life and changes in living conditions. Generally, a household with more than two sons does not usually divide until the second son is married (Huang, 1992, p.28), but this was interrupted by community construction. Community construction has promoted better living conditions, both in quality and quantity. As attested to by residents:

*(R, male, 57): 'I got three houses [as part of the compensation for community construction], I am living in one of them, 80 m<sup>2</sup>, my son lives in one, 100 m<sup>2</sup>, and the smallest one, 60 m<sup>2</sup>, we rent out'.*

*(R, male, 36): 'yes, our family moved together, but we have many houses, we don't live together'.*

As it was mentioned in the case of land compensation, the residential houses compensated by land expropriation exacerbated a trend of independent families. This means that the abundant availability of houses from land compensation provided the material conditions for family division. Now, with several houses after community

construction, most young residents in the new community chose to leave their parents household even before marriage. Older residents believed the young were becoming increasingly distant from them. This has damaged familial relations leading to parental worries about the future during older age and family obligations.

*E. Decay of traditional constraint - intergenerational considerations*

Chinese familial values among family members were rooted in the long agricultural history of Chinese society, the cultural influence of Confucianism and the patriarchal clan system (Fang, 2000, pp.33-34; Hwang, 1999, p.183). Chinese families, in particular, have traditionally placed great importance on children's roles and duties as part of the larger Chinese value of filial piety, of which family obligation is a central component. In Chinese traditional values, it has been suggested that obligations to the family include a belief in the need to repay parents for their efforts in raising the children, a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the family, and a respect for the authority of the family (Ho, 1996; Huang, 1989; Yang, 1989, pp.40-42).

One risk presented by living apart is the issue of 'caring for the old' in rural areas. Most rural elderly people do not qualify for retirement benefits (Lee & Xiao, 1998, p.47) but rely heavily on China's Confucian tradition of filial piety and proper duties of support for parents (Ho, 1996, pp.155-165). Notwithstanding family obligations that were legally reinforced in law (such as in Criminal Law of 1979 and in the revised Marriage Law of 1980), requiring parents to rear and educate their children and children to support and assist their parents (Friedmann, 1991; Leung, 1997, pp.99-101); familial responsibilities and obligations have not always been so strong. At times, it has been degenerated by community construction, especially in facing new lives in the new settlement. For example:

*(R, female, 60): 'there are filial children, but some are not. Now you cannot see, people are living in their own houses, they spend their own money, you cannot see now. But not in the old rural villages, you can know everything that happened in the village, right? Several brothers, your behaviour inclines to this, then you offend the other, easy to fight, could generate family business easily'.*

Many of the residents interviewed acknowledged a kind of negative feeling toward family obligations, which is related closely to the actions of the younger generations. For many residents, especially the elders, the declining trend had to be a necessary step during community construction and resulted in shorter or longer-term alienation. For example:

*(R, male, 36): 'it should be, links between elders were enhanced, young generations become worse and worse, mostly; alienation, elders, we got lots of chances to stay together, when youngsters go out to work, alienation surely happens'.*

As observed in the new settlement, elderly respondents were viewed as facilitating better and more reciprocal relationships within families. Again, these relationships were described as close, supportive, and protective, and in some instances, residents felt more comfortable in having filial children.

#### *F. Clear familial responsibilities*

In order to further explore the potential of family roles, the residents were asked to describe their common family life - which they considered of most importance. The majority of residents interviewed identified their roles clearly, typical explanatory comments in this respect included:

*(R, female, 59): 'I will collect the children from school after school; I will stay at home the whole morning...watching TV, or walking for a while in the community. I am looking after the kids, young couples go to work'.*

*(R, female, 54): 'now the situation is, young couples are working, and their mother/father should look after their children, that is, elders' necessary mission, they have to achieve...it is their obligation. Youngsters marry first, elders help to look after children, no delay'.*

Filial relationships were proved to be valuable in encouraging the supportive behaviour of family members. The findings of this study suggest that clearly classified roles of family members can be seen as a kind of children's filial performance. To some extent, this was due to the economic benefit from land compensation that means elders have no need to work. Typical comments in this respect included:

(R, male, 53): *'they [my son and my daughter] don't let me work anymore, just let me to look after the child for them, like me, idle time every day, relaxed and easy'.*

(R, female, 54): *'I don't need to work, playing at home, collecting from and sending children to school, this is my mission'.*

It can be seen clearly that, within families, work was divided according to new domestic demands in the new settlement. The elders that were interviewed, both males and females were often responsible for affairs within families, such as housework and child-care, while younger workforces were often responsible for economic income without many pressures. Overall, as the participants in this research were under 60, relationships between grandparents, parents and grandchildren in the new families can be explained in this way: younger elders would give up their paid work to look after their grandchildren; the obligations that children need to look after parents in their old age according to the request of filial piety has been retained; elders over-60 may have different situations and they may need to be looked after rather than take responsibility for taking care of their grandchildren.

The diversity of residents' views and experiences, with respect to family life, highlights the complexities of attempting to explore the new situations of families. In particular, the challenge to traditional values has illustrated the potential for differentiating family members' involvement in economic activities and daily life. It is hard to say whether the familial units in the new settlement have been fostered as key economic units, but at least the commodification of labour was quite meaningful to the families and residents without good occupational skills. Based on the above, from ongoing social and economic productions, residents' families, which were the basic rural units, have been observed to take on more and more urban characteristics.

## **Conclusion**

Interviews undertaken for this study aimed to reveal residents' interpersonal relations, especially examined from a community standpoint and discussed in specific terms. With respect to communal experiences, interpersonal relations hold resonance in their daily lives, but face new situations. Communal experiences were likely to verify residents' dependence on informal social networks. It was also

generally recognised by residents that dependence on informal relations could be temporary; for example, their unstable alliance in relocation and the necessity of reconnections impacted by the new living conditions. Moreover, the decay of ethical power as evidenced by utilitarian marriages explained residents' lower care about informal relations, proactively or reactively.

Formal relations were centred on cadres, which have played a significant role in land expropriation and land compensation, with many criticisms though. To some extent, residents' acceptance for community construction was harmed by cadres, especially due to their rent-seeking in land expropriation and compensation. In addition, although getting access to economic activities during community construction depended to some extent on formal channels of relations with cadres, and sometimes they were applied through informal ways, residents were likely to be more independent when dealing with their own affairs.

Indeed, the newly-constructed community, compared to the assumption that the old village as a resource of subsistence due to agricultural production based on land, appeared to have inadequate regards for the consideration of residents' urban life. This situation was intensified by the lower social support residents could get from formal and informal relations. Combined with the change to a consumption-oriented situation, families chose to change themselves to sustain their development and become new production units from several dimensions. Consequently, families become more independent compared to previous forms in rural villages. Traditional values of a family were kept, but the new family structure has undermined the intergenerational ties formed on the basis of traditional values. In short, the transformation is not just a changing pattern of family relations: it is a part of a process of emerging urban family structures in China's community construction campaign and an index of the development of social involvement among residents. Continually, residents' familial experiences provided new angles to understand the impact of physical change - the subject of the next chapter.

Overall, the empirical evidence shows that formal and informal relations associated with the traditional family values inherent in the old villages is by no means guaranteed. However, it was also clear for the residents that the relationship to and experience of these networks was complex and has been transformed. At the



same time their commitment to the area and spaces, where residents' daily activities take place, constitutes their understanding of community. Transitory and contradictory social interactions are key issues to evaluate the effects of community construction that will be explored in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Physical circumstances and the reconnections of residents

#### Introduction

The preceding chapter takes as its starting point the search for social linkage and flow of social interactions following community construction. In some cases, continuing and supportive networks in formal, informal and familial channels are not as effective as in the past; alternatives that arise from the reconnections of residents in the new physical circumstances make it reasonable for them to seek new dependences, which are taking over the content of their relationships now. In other words, interpersonal relations evident from the shift from rural to urban ways of life show the persistence of primary ties and underline the necessity for reconnections between residents in the new physical circumstances.

The influence of new physical circumstances on residents' communal experiences has been mentioned in a subsection in the previous chapter (see Chapter Five). Community construction in China is commonly evaluated by measuring the extent to which a newly-constructed community could fulfil intended policy objectives (Long *et al.* 2010; Tian *et al.* 2014)<sup>34</sup>. However, without the support of significant empirical evidence, researchers often fail to trace the influence of place, space and social relations and how these have transformed in the move from rural to urban settings. The following discussion presented in this chapter examines the impact of the changes in the physical environment on residents and their social life, which occurs for the most part in small groups, such as families, neighbourhood and informal and formal groups (Lewis, 1965, p.437).

It is argued in this chapter that a reconnected commitment to the newly-constructed settlement is discernible. As Low and Altman (1992, p.7) affirmed, 'places are repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached'. Based on locality, continuity and place attachment, residents developed multi-faceted relationships and gained varied

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<sup>34</sup> For example, the contents of rural community construction generally include five aspects (see Chapter Three).

experiences that have witnessed a growth in commitment to the new settlement. Put another way, the newly-constructed settlement that residents 'experienced in everyday life' (Riley, 1992, p.13) combined with the reconnection of residents, becomes an integrated process of 'being'. Additionally, one's experience of a space is based upon the social relations within it (Lofland, 1998, p.10). The new spaces were rearranged by community construction and constituted the physical basis for reconnections of residents. In this research, the situation of residents' social relations shaped by the new spaces is investigated specifically from the private and public spaces in the new settlement.

## **6.1 Place attachment in community construction**

Residents obtain highly personal meanings from change of place, which should be concerned with all the relevant experiences that make places (Relph, 1976, p.6). For residents, the very term 'place' conjures up a range of emotional themes for their consciousness of 'community' and the particular concern of community construction with place has tended to be translated into local area concerns. In particular, geographical territory is viewed by residents as an inherent factor in the formation of social relations after the relocation. In shifting from a rural to an urban environment, the experience of place belongs to the past - the old villages, as much as the current - the new settlement. In short, the newly-constructed community implies continuities and discontinuities with regard to place in the process of building 'community'.

### **6.1.1 Community as locality and continuity**

Community stands for a set of local social arrangements (Crow & Allan, 1994, p.1), which is consistent with community construction in that the 'past' has played a role in the formation of the physical or visible boundaries for a community. In pursuit of the objectives of consolidation, community construction aimed to integrate nearby villages so as to effectively achieve the formation of a new 'community'. Certainly, the residents interviewed have experienced displacement. Many respondents talked explicitly about how their old villages were regarded as particular places in comparison to the new settlement through the continued use of the names of old villages in their daily lives. Typical expressions are:

(R, female, 35): *'I am from y [the old village]; all four villages are concentrated in this new community'.*

(C, male, 53): *'after relocating to the high-rise buildings, when we meet new friends, when making introductions to each other, it becomes like, you are from village L, and I am from that village M'.*

Using the names of old villages, rather than the new settlement, is associated with local roots and continuity of the past - place attachment. Place attachment shows an affective bond that residents have established with both their old villages and the newly-constructed community, and one in which memories and understandings of the past help residents to endow meaning in their new lives (Bruner, 1990, p.17). Returning many times to the old places was also common for residents even after several years. For example, as the experience of one resident shows:

(R, male, 60): *'I often come back, here is the east of the old road of my village where was a spring when it rains. But it has disappeared, so does the apple tree garden; now they are all gone, just over there',*

***The interviewee pointed to me.***

It can be seen from the above quotations that place attachment functions as an active bond linking residents with the past (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983, p.233). In addition, some elderly residents expressed that they cherish the memory of agricultural activities in the past, ploughing, for example, which were used by as important symbolic events to remember the old places. The old rural landscape has been quickly destroyed, but the deep-rooted agricultural sentiments still exist, especially in feelings towards the land. Typical expressions included:

(C, female, 30): *'such as the elders, they still have dependence on the land, my mum said, when she gets older, she prefers the old environment'.*

(R, female, 44): *'[sigh] no land any more, just a little bit, even if you want to farm, you cannot. Actually, farms in the past were better than the situation now'.*

Both notable places and specific feelings associated with the land and agriculture from the past are consciously valued by residents as deeply meaningful, and they have been taken by residents as examples to present the junctures of the past places with the new settlement. Nostalgia for the old villages and sentiments towards the land are closely related to local roots that provide the basis of continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p.208). In addition to the directly perceived consciousness of place attachment above, which has been acknowledged by researchers (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Proshansky *et al.*, 1983), place attachment is often unconscious unless there is a noticeable break. Community construction was acknowledged as a break from their former communal life for residents. As such, in contrast to the names of old villages, some residents used the new name to express where they are living now:

*(R, male, 60): 'our whole village moved here, now it is called PY'.*

*(R, female, 54): 'this area, the whole area is called PY'.*

The use of the new name by residents, which was politically imposed by government, to some extent, represents a general, but grudging acceptance of community construction: an urban community. To some extent, this acceptance is also an example that community construction reflects a direct break in place attachment. Overall, locality and continuity are not only explicit in the responses of residents to the old villages, but also closely related to their contemporary daily lives (Feldman, 1990, p.223). Additionally, drawing on the above, it can also be argued that the relationship between residents and places is conscious and interactive (Low, 1992, p.165).

A place, the longer residents have lived in, they would feel more rooted and greater attachment to it (Elder, 1996, p.399). Residents were from nearby villages and they are now living in the same settlement. In this context, the newly-constructed community has the potential to provide opportunities for the reconnections of residents, which could ultimately generate community attachment. Needless to say, this is an optimistic trend which was not stipulated in policies, but occurred in reality in the new settlement, and from the point of which, community building by way of community construction could be vibrant.

### 6.1.2 Place identity and the sense of belonging

Place identity was originally considered to be made up of a 'cluster of positively and negatively valenced cognitions of physical settings' (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983, p.62). Residents of the new settlement come from the same local area but from different villages, and this was one advantage for community construction with regard to the maintenance of place identity. In addition, since drawing boundaries between insiders and outsiders is important in constructing communities (Cornwell, 1984), there are concerns that rootedness and a sense of belonging are acquired by the exclusion of outsiders (Pratt, 1984, p.43). Indeed, preoccupation with the status of insiders or outsiders has led to a degree of frustration for local residents. In particular, the outsiders, mainly the renters referred to in the preceding chapters, were believed by insiders to undermine the familiarity of residents in the new settlement. As one resident observed:

*(R, male, 36): 'from the old villages, people are familiar with each other, the bond is stronger, but I think it is not in this new community. Now the people have their own circles and...he who is renting my houses, I never see him make new friends in the new settlement; maybe he has his own friends'.*

It can be seen clearly that place identity has played a role in residents' social relations. The importance of place identity was that an identity of insider could be used to reconnect oneself with other community members in the newly-constructed community. As argued by Duveen, identity is as much about identification as recognition (2001, pp.256-258). Thus, the label of 'our people' is particularly important for residents. While for the renters, who seem to be marginalised in the new settlement, recognition is not easy. Additionally, residents asserted that communication with outsiders does not take high priority within the new settlement. It has to be mentioned that in this research, there are also residents who have effective communications with outsiders. However, many residents interviewed for this study perceived a strong sense of place identity that is closely related to the old villages. The role of this place identity is revealed to be important in maintaining or developing their social networks. The sense of belonging to a place identity is as residents observed still connected to the old settlements:

(R, male, 44): *'residents prefer to communicate with residents from the old villages, it is easier; but with them [outsiders], sometimes when we meet, we would have a short talk, but you know, on feelings, it is a little bit less than our people'.*

(R, male, 36): *'those people, they are migrant workers, not like us, we are local residents...they are only living here for a period, here is the provincial capital, and they will leave somehow'.*

From these descriptions, what should be particularly noteworthy is the identification rooted in localities and continuities. For the residents interviewed, guaranteeing the locality and continuity within the newly-constructed community provided a basis on which to sustain social relationships and to engage in a range of social activities.

#### 6.1.3 Place identification in process

Drawing on the above analysis, perhaps instead of thinking identification with the new settlement has already been accomplished after community construction, we should think of identification as a reproduction which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted by the interactions between residents and the new settlement. In other words, the residents' sense of self-identification changed from rural villages to urban settings not only over place, but also over time (Bondi, 1993, p.85). For residents who have been living in the new settlement for a period, do they still regard themselves as villagers and farmers and are they recognised as such? Typical responses included:

(C, male, 50): *'no, not really, they are still farmers'.*

(R, male, 60): *'here is city as well; food, drink, dress and living are all the same as city centre. Some aspects of lives are even better than living in city centre'.*

(R, male, 36): *'we are, could be urban citizens, but we don't have formal jobs, if you say that we are farmers, we don't have land'.*

Residents struggle with their status in the new community, which is an identification related to the physical environment and patterns of social symbols, either consciously or unconsciously (Proshansky, 1978, p.155). Additionally, the

self-identification of residents, which frequently looks back on the transformation of the past lifestyles, was used by residents to make meanings in the new geographical place (Cohen, 1985, pp.15-19). It is clear from the above quotations that an urban status is not consistently agreed by residents, but it is likely that a new geographical community is being forged - residents have been trying to make places 'their own' by acquiring knowledge about the difference between rural and urban lifestyles.

Overall, the sense of belonging to the old villages has been maintained, and simultaneously, place identity is on its way to being formed. Place attachment facilitates a sense of security and well-being, defines group boundaries, and stabilises memories against the passage of time. The severe consequence of relocation was not the extinction of continuities and localities. Instead, residents gained new identifications in the new circumstances. However, a core question emerged as to the extent to which these experiences of place attachment and self-identification could develop to community attachment?

#### 6.1.4 From place attachment to community attachment

Community construction has been proved useful to improve living conditions. For residents, one major way to guarantee their engagement in the newly-constructed community is to get the ownership of house property rights (*fangwuchanquan* 房产权) of the housings that compensated through land expropriation. In particular, residents believe that the ability to own their houses in the new settlement is the critical step for the maintenance of communal feelings moving forward. Typical expressions are:

*(R, male, 58): 'firstly, you have to occupy your own house, then you can stay long...here is not, anzhifang [temporary houses 安置房], relocating to here, I have a house but no house property right certificate, that's why I said we cannot stay too long...five years, ten years or twenty years all depends on the government'.*

*(R, male, 56): 'the houses here are collective-owned property ownership, they are temporary...the new settlement occupied too much land, you can live in here but no house property right certificate; if they give you the certificate, it would become commercial accommodation, and houses become your own houses'.*



As such, it is wasted effort to construct community only to gain a sense of temporary stability and security for residents due to home ownership being a positive variable of place attachment (Bolan, 1997; Mesch & Manor, 1998). As in this case, the ownership of houses is regarded as a resource which helps residents to adapt to and settle down in the new settlement. Residents' comments on community attachment in relation to worries about the temporary houses are presented below:

*(R, male, 57): 'if here are temporary dwellings, we have to move again in the future; if they want us to move, we have to request more compensation, at least double, or we will not move. We cannot be naive as the first time. These buildings cannot be stayed in too long. We still don't get our owner property certificate'.*

*(R, male, 58): 'these are temporary houses...I don't know what will happen in the future, who knows'.*

As it was stipulated in China's constitution, land in the old villages was collective-owned that could not be traded on the open market; however, according to land law article 43, land can be requisitioned for public interests as it was done in the area studied for this research (see Chapter Five): the collective-owned land was traded and transferred to the local government and real-estate development companies. In this situation, the newly-constructed community was constructed on land which was no longer collective-owned anymore. As the right of use of collective-owned land was handed to local governments and land became urban use land<sup>35</sup>, if residents did not have an owner property certificate, they would not have legal rights for their residences, especially the 'own right' and 'use right'. This lack of rights meant they could not actually have and deal with their 'own house'. As such, there could be contradictions between the interests of residents and the local governments in the development of this newly-constructed community. As the owner property certificate can legally guarantee the own and use right of residents' houses, some residents suggested that this explained why government has no willingness to give a housing property right certificate to residents. Illustrative responses are:

*(R, female, 35): 'maybe they are worried that if they give the property ownership certificate to residents, it is hard to let us move again'.*

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<sup>35</sup> The period of urban land use right lasts for 70 years as was stipulated by law (Gan, 2016, pp.34-37).

(R, male, 59): *'these buildings are just 6 floors, look at the commercial accommodations there, at least 15 floors, if here are constructed in the same form, it can save at least 60 percent of the whole areas...the government would sell the saved area again'*.

Based on the above, many residents asserted that commitment to the newly-constructed community was premised more specifically on the ownership of houses. Indeed, it is likely that the experience of attachment was, to some extent, moved from place attachment to community attachment in the new settlement, driven by housing considerations accounting for their survival and living. More than evaluating place attachment, the experiences of residents in forging social reconnections in the new physical environment are helpful to understand community construction, especially from private space and public spaces.

## **6.2 Private spaces: house, home and neighbourhoods**

The analysis of private spaces will focus on the spatial change of house and how it affects residents' communal experiences. Generally, home connotes a more active relationship between individuals and the surrounding physical spaces (Saegert, 1985, p.287). Home stands for 'the quintessence of private space' and it has the ability to exclude strangers (Twigg, 2006, pp.124-125). As such, home, which commonly equates to residential houses by residents, was the first to be affected in the change of spaces. With regard to physical structure and space, community construction by way of land consolidation has been shown to be effective in improving living conditions and public facilities (Miranda *et al.*, 2006, p.518). As in this case, the disordered bungalows in the old villages had been replaced by orderly urban high-rise buildings. The new residential spaces are characterised by an urban type of housing with denser populations in more concentrated spaces (see Figure 6-1).

In particular, residents offered a variety of feelings about the change of spaces from the previous dispersed bungalows to the concentrated high-rise buildings. Residents commonly explained their private houses as being isolated and thus hold some reservations about the new residential spaces. For example:

Figure 6-1 Living conditions in old villages and new settlement



*(R, female, 58): 'in the old villages, we all knew each other. It does not work here. We are living in higher levels, in the same building, but we do not know others'.*

*(C, female, 30): 'in the old villages, houses were arranged at the same level, and maybe there were one or two centres used by people to aggregate...for example, residents will centre on one certain area, families are easy to concentrate spatially. But after moving to the new community, the high-rise buildings, families have clear boundaries; it is not as easy as before to get together'.*

The evidence suggests that houses in the new settlement become more personal rather than familial as they afford residents more private spaces. Residents variously envisaged the change of house as having both individual and social impacts. In recognition of the fact that dispersed or concentrated houses are likely to have comprehensive impacts, it seems reasonable to assume that, from the comparison of the transformations from old living conditions, new houses will reveal the roots of why and how the new living style functions in residents' reconnections. Being the first to be discussed is the changed property of houses and spaces.

#### 6.2.1 Home as a social unit: from semi-public to private

The houses in the old villages usually consisted of several small-scale living houses, but with a relatively large courtyard. Generally, family members lived in the same yard with no vacant housing, and if an old house was dilapidated, it was easier to replace it directly than it is now. Firstly, a house in the old villages had a fluid

boundary between the public and the private in terms of the use of space. Typical expressions are:

*(R, female, 44): 'living conditions are upgraded now, but what is critical, in the old village, the bungalow, how free was there...after eating dinner, you can visit your neighbours conveniently, sitting together, talking together'.*

*(C, female, 30): 'like the habits in the old villages, it is normal to visit your neighbours after dinner; most families will do that. But in the new community, it is inconvenient to go upstairs or down stairs; there are fewer chances to get together'.*

*(R, female, 54): 'living in the high-rise buildings, when you go out, no matter wherever you want to go, everywhere is gongjiade [公家的 public/collective spaces] ...in the past, at least you had your own space'.*

In the past, it can be seen that people can not only enjoy their private life, more importantly, houses were regarded as meaningful environments for social life that occupied semi-public characteristics. It was also this semi-public characteristic of houses that supported families as social units in the old villages. The situation has totally changed in the new settlement: the residential environment has been concentrated and there are more rooms/spaces in the residential house.

Secondly, sentiments of home have attenuated. The experience of home is usually taken for granted because it is familiar (Seaman, 1979, p.70). However, new residential spaces have influenced the feelings of residents about home (see Chapter Five). Simply, more houses compensated by community construction did not guarantee the feelings of home for residents. In contrast, the loss of frequent contact with each other has been experienced by family members. The phenomenon that new housing styles provided more personalised spaces but less sentiments of the fixed place to return to: home (Norberg-Shultz, 1985, p.12), involves an important concern of personal space. For example:

*(R, male, 60): 'we got several houses from land compensation. I am living apart from my son, when on festivals like the New Year, we stay together, not like in the past, living in the old village, no matter eat or live, we were together'.*

The responses above highlight the transformations of house and home from the rural to urban environment. However, it is not necessarily correct to say that family intimacy has deteriorated, as there is no evidence to support this. However, the dwelling situation serves to disadvantage the elderly residents, spatially and emotionally. The elderly residents interviewed (especially those above 50, who have a son or daughter), in the new settlement, are more likely to live alone than any time in the past, as community construction has extended the spatial distribution of family members. Moreover, empirical evidence shows that inherent links among peers in the past are impacted by the new spaces as well. Illustrative comments included:

*(R, male, 57): 'I still keep contact with the old friends and old neighbours. But I think bungalow is better than high buildings, when we get old, we have to climb to upstairs. They don't have lifts'.*

*(R, male, 36): 'in contrast, I think the high-rise buildings and the spaces are not good for people's development. For example, some elders possibly do not have much willingness to come out because of the high floors, maybe they just walk nearly around the building and they often go back early, to some extent these are linked with the changes of space'.*

Evidence suggests that new residential spaces - houses in the new settlement - are becoming more private. Due to the property of houses which has changed from semi-public to private, the new urban living style undermines the ability of residents to influence each other beyond the perceived or real spatial boundaries (Margulis, 2003, p.420-421). Here are some typical comments:

*(R, female, 35): 'it is not as good as the past. But, it could be better after a long time. Now, when go back to home, close the door, nobody comes out, nobody cares about others. In the past, when you come out in the evening, we can meet and talk, like next generations now, they almost do not go out'.*

*(R, male, 44): 'I do not have much contact with my peers, inconvenient. When you go back to the high-rise building, enter your house; close the door, if you want to visit some friend, who knows whether they are at home or not?'*

In an urban settlement, residents are more likely to have less opportunity for frequent face-to-face contacts compared to the past. Briefly, empirical evidence suggests that physical distances and the inconvenience caused in the current urban residential spaces may be responsible for diminishing social contacts. In addition, the village committees, which were responsible for organising and managing household issues, have lost their role in the new settlement; many of their functions are replaced by the residential management companies who deal with household issues on a more individual level. As observed by one resident:

*(C, female, 30): 'living in a concentrated place, residents are living nearby, but it is not like in the past when people would gather in their own yard, now in their own houses, residents would focus on their own familial affairs. For example, me, my habit has changed compared with when I was living in past, when I have trouble now, I would call the property management company rather than ask for help from my neighbours'.*

Evidence supports the view that the semi-public feature of houses is being lost during community construction. It can also be verified both in this and the previous chapter that the connections of residents inherited from the past communal ties have attenuated. Changes in property and home have resulted in the decayed situation represented by less frequent face-to-face communications in private spaces; however, it cannot completely explain everything. Consequently, there is a reasonable expectation that an optimal space can be found in the urban residential settings, especially that the property of home as a social unit has been changed. Put another way, there remains a gap with regards to the new spatial environment and the interactions of residents on the basis of familial units, but this may be found instead in the sphere of neighbourhood.

Investigating neighbours in the new settlement largely free this research from a focus on residential bases to residents' reconnections. This makes it possible that the discovery of communal lives could link neither to a particular family situation nor to a set of individual sentiments, but to residents' structural reconnections at the community level. As such, with this approach, we are then better able to assess the position of neighbourhood ties within the context of overall structures of social relationships.

### 6.2.2 Communal ties as neighbourhood relations

How ‘neighbourhood’ has been conceptualised in Western society has been discussed in Chapter Two. In China, there is a typical term used to represent neighbourhood: *jiefang* 街坊 or *linli* 邻里, which means neighbours on the basis of the street and residential proximity. In the newly-constructed settlement, neighbours were newly-demarcated:

#### ***I asked about the categories of neighbours:***

*(R, female, 35): ‘we got our houses by drawing lots (house numbers are selected by way of drawing by residents, such as a resident in village A, he will draw with his peers in other villages together to know where exactly he will live in the new settlement), it is all messed up’.*

*(R, male, 57): ‘neighbours are not the old neighbours anymore, now after you live in the high-rise buildings, you should develop new relations. But now the relationships are not as the same as before’.*

Chinese people have always set great store in neighbours within a community: good neighbours are better than distant relatives (*yuanqinburujinlin* 远亲不如近邻), so to speak. In the absence of social pension systems in rural areas, neighbourhood ties in villages could provide villagers with social support (Xu & Chow, 2006, p.200). A neighbourhood relied upon familiarity and sentiments that were established over time by residents, and local relationships and local roots were fundamental:

*(R, male, 36): ‘neighbours are not the original neighbours in the old village anymore, faraway than before, actually, not that far, all living in these buildings...but the form has changed, communicate form, from visiting to encountering, but the basis of interpersonal relations, the emotions are still there’.*

*(R, female, 54): ‘my old neighbour’s son married last year, I suifenzi [随份子 give money/help as returns], because when my daughter get married, I know he will come to help me...convention based on neighbours...these elders, if they died, there were no acquaintances/familiarity in the village’.*

It can be seen that the new residential environment has intervened in the former continuities of local relations from the old villages and has influenced the cognition of neighbours in the new settlement. From the perceptions of residents, the broad meaning of neighbourhood used in the old villages has ended. As observed by the residents:

*(R, female, 54): 'neighbours, some of them are still villagers from the same village; when we moved to the high-rise buildings, now nobody chuanmen [串门 visiting the new neighbours] again...now, the family who is living to your next door is your neighbour'.*

*(R, male, 58): 'old villages cannot be changed by community construction, but neighbourhood has changed. We still know each other because we are all from the same village...neighbourhood are those living in upstairs and downstairs'.*

It can also be seen from the above quotations that with regard to meeting places and meeting opportunities, fixed places and regular meeting places are likely to become more random. Under the new circumstances, regular meetings between residents do not indicate a close relationship and home-visiting does not equate to street communications. Home visiting in the old villages often meant closer relationships that offered the reciprocal basis for mutual help. However, this becomes more difficult to achieve in the new spatial environments. As observed by residents:

*(R, male, 36): 'such as the neighbourhood festival, I doubt the real effect of it; maybe you could meet new friends, but the feelings are not as strong as in the past, you probably will not invite them to your home'.*

*(R, male, 32): 'of course, I still communicate with my neighbours, but not as much frequent home-visiting as living in the bungalow. Not like before, after moving to the high-rise buildings, some live in this side, some live in that side, not good anyhow'.*

In addition, in the past, interdependencies between neighbours were not only reflected by neighbourhood activities, but also reciprocity was included in it. Put another way, neighbourhood relations often meant a channel of social support for residents to achieve their family goals in the past. However, in the new settlement,



residents have new neighbours which are probably with low relevance to their family affairs, and not even interdependencies and reciprocities:

*(R, female, 60): 'neighbours firstly are on the basis of acquaintances; but it may not be achieved now, as to my family, we just say hello to other residents...because we are not familiar before, it is just a politeness'.*

From the discussions above, neighbourhood relations are valued precisely to reveal the transformations in recognition by residents, either consciously or unconsciously. Old links based on neighbourhood persisted to some extent; however, the development of neighbourhood under the circumstances of the new settlement is the main themes of social life.

### 6.2.3 Development of neighbourhood

*A. New interactions have transcended the limitation of geographical distances*

Social interactions have been increasingly dis-embedded from time and space (Giddens, 1991). Social media has encouraged the shift of communications among residents, which was mainly facilitated by telephones. Many residents suggested that they would talk with their old neighbours on the phone or call them up. Typical responses included:

*(R, male, 58): 'we are living together [in the same place] anyhow, in a same community, we all know who lives in which buildings, sometimes we can meet each other...there is a contact book in the collective committee when we select our houses, you can find anyone'.*

*(R, male, 60): 'we all live in high-rise buildings now, you can still find them, you can call them out, appoint a place'.*

The new mode of communication is not an adequate substitute for the old links. The contemporary modes of communication have lessened but not eliminated the constraints of distance in maintaining the contacts between residents. Put another way, the mode of communication in the new settlement allow residents to transcend spaces, and have made their interactions meaningful, yet space is still a constraint.

Social networks are widespread with facilities, such as shops and supermarkets. More meeting places provide more meeting opportunities for residents and these new spaces have good potential to produce communal feelings. Some illustrative expressions are:

*(R, male, 32): 'most of us will go to, like the place near the market, we will stay together. Now, we make new friends, after seven or eight years, some strangers become familiar'.*

*(R, female, 58): 'you have no choice, you have no place to go, I see that many elders come here [square/market] at afternoon, it is better for them to have a place to communicate with each other'.*

In any case, it has to be pointed out that people are only attached partly to the former neighbourhood relations. In fact, conversely, former neighbourhood ties tended to be reorganised into new and extensive networks by residents within the new spatial settlement. On the basis of the old links of neighbourhood relations, the interactions of residents in the new settlement has transcended the limitation of geographical distances to achieve a new meaning - public acquaintances. These networks are tightly bounded with a cluster of network members, differentiated in socio-demographic factors.

#### *B. Socio-demographic factors in new modes of interactions*

Two socio-demographic factors are prominent in the analysis of the new social interactions: age and gender. Firstly, residents observed that the frequency of communications was mainly mediated by age. It is asserted that elders were perceived to have more communications with their old neighbours and peers, and their communications returned to contribute to the elders' roles in the new settlement. This is due partly to the new family structures referred to in Chapter Five: elders have more spare time and more local roots. The following responses are illustrative:

*(R, male, 36): 'the old village, people are more familiar with each other...this bond is stronger among residents. Aging people stay or live in the same place for many years, they have the basis for the familiarity...you know, they often chat with*

*new neighbours, like my father, even next door in the new settlement, they are good friends’.*

*(C, female, 48): ‘actually, neighbours in the old villages are closer than here even if the old houses are arranged individually...some residents, to the next generation, they do not know the old people lived in next door in the past. The tempo of life becomes faster, not like in the rural villages that people can meet frequently. Only the elders who look after the children in the new settlement maybe have more chances to meet’.*

Indeed, residents acknowledged that considerations of age were becoming more significant in neighbourhood relations because the elders were the main people holding old social links with former neighbours and peers from the old villages (see Figure 6-2). This can be explained by the social ties regarding the generations that were mainly inherited and passed on by elders who are perceived to sustain inheritance of the past. Particularly, elderly people are tied more to the old links, not only the former neighbourhood relations; more importantly, they have offspring thus with stronger feelings about a local community. Indeed, the majority of elders in this study believe that their acquaintances are critical in maintaining and sustaining continuity in social relations. Residents suggested that less intergenerational community communications contributed to a perception of strangeness. For example:

*(R, male, 42): ‘if these old people, above 60s, died, the old village would disappear basically’.*

Figure 6-2 Elders: acquaintances in the past and reconnections in the new settlement



Secondly, gender is an important consideration and here the research mainly focuses on women and their roles in maintaining and developing social ties. Some respondents, especially those who were personally engaged in community activities expressed a view that the role of gender was evident. Both from the observation and empirical evidence, women were more likely to responsible for reconnections of neighbours that on the basis of new residential settings; for example, most female interviewees mentioned the importance of chatting in the corridors (楼道间谈话) and other daily interactions in their daily lives (see Figure 6-3).

Figure 6-3 A picture of women's daily life



Indeed, as one female interviewee suggested, her leading role in neighbourhoods was evident in community activities, which enabled reconnections of residents to extend from individuals to families, and further networks:

*(R, female, 59): 'at the start, they don't come out, but when we become acquaintances, I often call them out and we stay together after dinner, chatting, sometimes, square dancing'.*

Drawing on the above, it can be argued that to some extent, women played significant roles in the development of new social linkages. Overall, the development of social networks, to some extent, was attributed to the changed property of houses as mentioned above. Most interactions in private spaces in the old villages were likely to be developed in the new spatial environment. It can also be argued that the development of social relations in the newly-constructed community goes beyond the limitations of the old types of neighbourhood; the developed social ties turned out to be an important mediator between space and community activity. However, even if

we grant that the new spatial environment encourages some relationships to be active, it does not necessarily follow that all interactions would be organised into communal ties. Residents tended to develop relationships which could facilitate their engagement with the new community and community life. Thus next, public space will be discussed because this is where the clues of community may emerge from and communal feelings could be generated directly and frequently.

### **6.3 Public spaces: public activities in the newly-constructed community**

In addition to the general location and individual domicile, public spaces are the most prominent sites in the newly-created community. To distinguish them from private houses, the term public space in this research refers to a broader definition that constitutes non-domestic physical sites, which include the notable congregation in parks, squares, the street (Lofland, 1998; Humphreys, 2010, pp.764-765) and other sites that serve the same social functions in the new settlement. It is believed that to use this broader definition, it could be more accurate to show the activities of residents and their interactions in the new circumstances. Interactions between residents in public spaces and the contents of community activities would imply their daily experiences interacted with the physical space in the newly-constructed 'community'.

Overall, public space plays an important role in the new settlement: it is not only where residents meet other community members and engage in community activities, but also serves as a site of social interactions, in which 'public places afford casual encounters in the course of daily life that can bind people together and give their lives meaning and power' (Carr *et al.*, 1992, p.45). In the old villages, there were no such closer and denser public spaces. The new settlement has therefore also provided opportunities that were previously unavailable. Now the newly-constructed community has, in a sense, become a kind of meaningful place, as introduced above. The changed property of private houses assisted in promoting the utilisation of public spaces in the daily lives of residents and it appears that they have been able to build new meanings from the spaces by way of community activities. For example:

*(C, female, 30): 'public spaces, is a direct sense that in the old villages, it is hard to get everyone together physically, in the spaces or structure of old houses. But there are enough public spaces in the new community for the interactions of residents, and public spaces I think are much more than old villages. In the old villages, people only got together in their own yard'.*

Community activities are critical in demonstrating the active role of residents in shaping the physical and social environment and the willingness to obtain new meanings from that environment. In addition, the active use of public spaces demonstrated by residents as observed in the empirical work supports the idea that relations between people and place are bidirectional and dynamic (Frederickson & Anderson, 1999, p.38). In particular, public activities in the new settlement are used to explore the interactions between residents and public spaces, which are mainly divided into two categories: politically-characterised activities and spontaneous activities.

#### 6.3.1 Politically-characterised activities

In China, government has diminished its direct control over specific community affairs, but group-based activities are still managed formally or informally; for example, some resident-initiated activities which could potentially generate profound social influences on social stability in the community were often not advocated by government, because local officials suggested that they were very cautious about mass events (Wai, 2015, p.918). However, government cannot let residents hanging around, which is also potentially bad. As such, politically-characterised activities were imported into the new settlement in the guise of enriching residents' community life. Some activities as observed by residents were:

*(R, male, 55): 'sending shows to the countryside [songxixiang 送戏下乡] is political assignment...the shows take turns to play around here. It is a mission, and after finishing, the cadres should upgrade the situation to the upper government'.*

*(C, male, 50): 'there are not many community activities, but like the activities arranged by the upper government, we advocate residents participate in...this new settlement, at least provide some public spaces for public activities which also*

*indicates that residents' life are developing, the main purpose is to enrich residents' life, a kind of civilisation-construction'.*

The fieldwork has shown that politically-characterised activities were arranged and promoted to residents by government, whether they were popular or old-fashioned. As argued by residents, these activities were not popular and they were always in the form of opera or local dramas. Illustrative responses included:

*(R, male, 55): 'now the shows are not attractive like before, young people are working so they cannot watch, people of old ages don't work but they don't want to watch either'.*

It was expected by the government that, through these programs and activities, residents would gradually develop a sense of community and communal values, and finally sustain social stability. However, it may not be possible to do so for these activities were more likely meaningless to residents, as indicated by their responses and their attitudes to the politically-driven activities. In short, governments maintained a hand in community affairs and residents continued to be perceived as passive participants. Despite a few contrary expressions by cadres, the empirical work for this study overwhelmingly suggests that politically-characterised activities led to disappointment towards the government by residents and the administratively-expected meaning of social control seemed unnecessary. To some extent, residents were united in their 'disappointment' with the government. It was expressed by residents that in many gatherings, resentment towards corrupt cadres often became the topic of their discussions and residents' disappointment has become a starting point of reconsideration of their collective activities.

However, one point here we cannot ignore is these politically-characterised activities have functioned as occasions of social gathering for residents (see Figure 6-4). Put another way, the meaningful parts for constructing community may not be recognised directly by residents, but the meeting opportunities and spaces for interactions were really created by politically-characterised activities. As such, from a long-term point of view, instead from the consideration of cultivating the sense of community rapidly that was expected by government, this politically-characterised activity is valuable.

Figure 6-4 Attendance of residents to the politically-characterised activities



### 6.3.2 New and spontaneous activities

A community ‘masks the differentiation within itself by using or imposing a common set of symbols’ (Cohen, 1985, p.273) and in the case of community construction, symbols rooted in the old villages germinated in the new settlement, which was mainly reflected by the new and spontaneous activities. Spontaneous activities were helpful for residents to adapt to an urban life style and to settle down in the new environment.

#### *A. Spontaneous activities and the new life style*

With respect to the change of lifestyle from rural to urban, with more leisure resources and opportunities, especially after abandoning the inherited habits in the past, more recreational activities were organised by residents. Overwhelmingly, residents reported that leisure activities increased in the new settlement, whether they participate or not. For example:

*(C, male, 58): ‘such as here, there are two dance teams, they also have facilities. Not in the past. More and more people would come in the evening’.*

Engaging residents in activities is likely to satisfy requests from cadres to sustain social stability. While in terms of making life meaningful, compared to politically-characterised activities, residents preferred small-group-scale activities or



popular spontaneous activities. Certain experiences, for example, square dancing (*guangchangwu* 广场舞) that emerged in the new settlement made public spaces memorable and meaningful in residents' daily lives and these activities were considered as social interactions.

Engagement in spontaneously-developed activities was influenced, to some extent, by age and gender factors. Elderly people tend to have deep feelings of loss if they cannot continue to do their accustomed activities (Golant, 2003, pp.638-639); in this research, the accustomed activities for elders were closely related to activities of ploughing in the old villages, while the new living conditions encouraged older people to develop new roles and avoid idleness and dependency, as seen in the preceding chapter. Generally, from the residents interviewed, the elders had more willingness to participate in spontaneous activities. In addition, women were more likely to participate in these activities than men with numerous examples provided. Typical expressions are:

*(R, male, 60): 'community activities, we have square dancing, some women, only women, and some young married women, no man would dance; but sometimes they would come out for a walk, or just watch but would not join the dance team'.*

*(R, male, 55): 'men choose to stay at home to watch TV on the evening, even they come out, and most of them will play cards, like me'.*

Community activities become personal organised projects. Community construction has destroyed the old recreational activities, leaving individuals with alternatives within the new situation; as such, individuals chose from a wide range of practices to satisfy their needs. In the new settlement, there is more potential for residents to develop new networks because more interactions will be taken by more meeting opportunities.

#### *B. Economic activities: role and influences*

Losing land in community construction means that there are no farming activities in the new settlement. This change has influenced the daily lives of residents and their activities as seen from the above and argued in previous chapters. In this rapidly changing environment, villagers must leave the agricultural sector in

order to become economically independent, which means that they are unable to maintain and depend upon agricultural associations anymore. The example of economic activities in public spaces inherited from the past has become one alternative that served as transitional markers and to some extent, played an important role in restoring moments of residents' lives and experiences. For example:

*(R, male, 58): 'fourth and ninth in lunar calendar is ji [集 periodic market], and it has become a habit in my life, the site is in that street'.*

A local periodic market was located at one cross road of the new settlement every five days and residents periodically convened to do business. In rural areas, the local periodic market is a relation-based economy (Li & Li, 2000, pp.1-4), which serves as both a centre of social and economic life (Skinner, 1964). Indeed, the diversity of residents' economic activity was reflected by small-scale economic forms of self-employed business people in the local market, and from which the social relations were reorganised. The periodic local market with dense and overlapping social relations actually forged links between community members. Both participatory observations and interviews were conducted with residents and self-employed business people to gain information and understanding of the economic activities in the local market and its influences on the new settlement. Illustrative expressions included:

*(R, male, 47): 'we all ganji [go to the market], sometimes, you will meet your old neighbours, you will have a short talk, you can still recall your feelings about the past, you know you do not lose the relations'.*

*(R, male, 49): 'residents sell something grown in their land, such as melons. To be honest, you cannot depend on this to earn money, but for residents, it is a way of idle time, to communicate with others. I know them',*

***He pointed out other self-employed businessman to me,***

*'when I come here, without business, we will talk to each other, I know the most of people here'.*

(C, male, 58): *'people are all doing business in the same day, in the same place; it is a tradition, a convention. It is also a basis for residents to socialise; the old market was transformed to the new settlement'*.

It is likely that to some extent the local market kept the new settlement alive. However, during the fieldwork, the local market was forced to close by the government. In order to construct a modern and urban community with sanitary environment, safe conditions for transportation and a good order of market, the local periodic market was seen as old and out-dated by the government. It was advocated by government that all businessmen should sacrifice for the whole community and an indoor supermarket was constructed (see Figure 6-5).

Figure 6-5 The new indoor market – PY Big Market



In addition to those that resisted moving to the new market, business people who wanted to do business were required to pay high rental fees thus caused many to give up. Many outsiders who can afford rental fees are doing business in the new supermarket as reported by residents. For residents, the demolition was not only a pity for business but, more importantly, they cannot meet and communicate in the same public spaces, especially that the local market has gained cultural features - it has been a traditional event. As observed by residents:

(R, male, 42): *'all shops have been forced to move to the indoor market...for the consideration of sanitation, if all shops and business are together in Ji, will affect the image of the community...peddlers can only come out to do business after working time'*.

*(C, male, 56): 'ji is like something that have been brought to the new settlement from the old villages, spontaneously; now all businesses are in the indoor market...it is different, it is like, you feel like losing something'.*

The direct involvement of the government in the economic affairs was not a surprise, especially from the concerns of community management. However, it is hard to say whether the cancellation of the local market is a reflection of social control or not. Most importantly, it rekindled complaints by residents that it not only did not relieve their economic burden, but also increasingly resulted in feelings of loss.

In addition to these activities, events that serve as bridges to the past also endow the public spaces with new meanings. For example, accompanied by the change of spaces in communal settings, collective practices (weddings and funerals) in particular spaces not only maintain a sense of continuity, but also in changing formations. Overall, as symbols of 'the cultural distance which has been travelled' (Cohen, 1985, p.103) to the new settlement, the experiences of the past combined with currently used spaces in the new settlement made people connect the present to the past. Needless to say, social networks of residents have also changed along with spaces simultaneously involving rituals and traditions within the existing circumstances, which will be analysed in next chapter.

## **Conclusion**

It is fundamental to lay out a rural-urban integrated framework of analysis in the change of place and space and the attached activities. From rural villages to an urban settlement, residents relocated to an unfamiliar place. Locality and continuity that were inherited from the old villages supported the adaptation of residents in the new settlement. For local residents, the place identity is still a gateway for them to exclude outsiders. In addition, residents may also find that the identification of place that they have long held is not sustainable and the community attachment which could be developed from it at this stage is unstable.

The fast transformations of the residential settings brought about by community construction require responses to be made within new spaces by residents. The struggle between residents' social reconnections and the surrounding spaces was

intensified by the change of residential spaces. Families as social units were influenced deeply by the change of houses from semi-public to private, so to do neighbourhood relations that were forged on the basis of familial units in the past. However, residents were not passive receivers thus it was necessary for them to find new spaces for interacting to make life meaningful. On the basis of former neighbourhood relations, new modes of interactions have been developed within the new spaces.

In addition to new interactions, community activities were also developed by residents in public spaces. It appears that politically-characterised activities have not only exacerbated already existing complaints about the cadres and government, but also proven pointless in social control expected by governments. However, the role of social gathering by these activities cannot be ignored. The empirical findings presented in this chapter emphasise that the spontaneous activities of residents could promote familiarity and communications, which in turn promoted their inclusion in the new settlement and involvement in community affairs. It was through these activities that communal meanings were restored. However, as observed, economic activities were prohibited and the extent to which the spontaneous activities could be promoted to the community level are also problematic. In the analysis, factors of age and gender are found influential in the analysis of residents' communal lives.

The analysis presented in this chapter provides a positive perspective on the research questions with regard to the social reconnections of residents and the communal surroundings to which they belong. This is possibly due to that residents were all from nearby villages with an advantage of similar life styles and family statuses, in the past and contemporary lives. There is an ongoing trend in the new settlement that is worth noticing: the new development of traditions and rituals, alongside the change of place and space indicate that the reminders of the old villages require urgent attention, which will be examined in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Traditional elements in community construction:**

#### **Cultural events and specific performances of residents**

##### **Introduction**

Community construction is a term that captures the transformations from rural to urban living, which signifies a process of transfer from previously isolated villages to newly-constructed communities. In line with the findings presented in previous chapters and by following the discussions of the physical environment in Chapter Six, it is local traditional and cultural events that we must focus on to examine the realisation of traditional values in the newly-constructed community. In order to consolidate the arguments that the activities of residents serve to endow the existing physical circumstances with new meanings, this chapter will develop the discussions by exploring the cultural legacy the old villages provided for the newly-constructed community. In particular, by examining cultural events and the performances of residents with respect to traditions and rituals, the main objectives of this chapter are to scrutinise the revival of traditional elements in the new community and how they accommodate to one another.

Addressing the transformation of traditions, clans and rituals produced by community construction is a complex undertaking. In particular, rural religions, the role of clans and the ritualised life in the new settlement were necessarily readjusted by residents to fulfil their roles in communal lives. The new situation of cultural events reflects the alleged developments brought about by community construction. In short, this chapter concludes that the coexistence of traditional elements and their transformations in the new settlement over the years has been continued and considerably modified by the specific performances of cultural events by residents. The transformed traditions and rituals are not only a revival of the past, but also an expression of the new life. The subtle influences of community construction on residents' understanding of traditions in a new context are still going on.

## **7.1 Rural religions: symbolic reestablishment and local religious practices**

### **7.1.1 The context of rural religions in the old villages**

This chapter opens with transformed activities and practices surrounding rural religions to assert the values of traditional culture inherited from the old villages by residents. When analysing the new settlement as the unit bearing traditions and rural culture from the past, one must take inter-village matters into consideration since the newly-constructed community was drawn from four villages. Rural religion in the old villages of this study was mainly characterised by two features. The first was disparity and continuity, which were rooted in the local origins of the gods. A shrine to local tutelary divinity customarily exists in rural villages of China (Liao, 1990, pp.46-48; Tu & Tu, 2006, pp.66-68). The villages involved in community construction in this case were no exception. That is to say, the four villages that have been integrated into the newly-constructed ‘community’ had their own gods that were believed to protect the village members in the past and one of the most significant was the god of land. For residents, there was continuance to gods, which referred to the belief that gods were worshipped by them in a certain place, generation by generation, and the gods which were always in close relation to specific places had the power to respond to prayers.

However, here it must be mentioned that the power to define religion is in the hands of the government. Considering the political environment in China is not friendly or even sensitive toward religions, worship to gods or even activities in relation to religions in rural China are not always officially regarded as religion, but as folk culture or even superstition (Szonyi, 2009, p.321) which are rooted in ‘the level of masses’ (Chan, 1954, p.141). In this context, in order to explore the reproduction of cultural events in the new settlement, this research enquires into broader meaning with respect to rural religion.

### **7.1.2 Tradition-maintaining mechanisms by restoring sacred sites**

The transformation of rural religion that was driven by community construction has resulted in reproduction of traditions and rituals, consciously and elaborately. Primary examples were located in places linked with death, such as tombs or where funerals were held in the old villages - soil temples (Cohen, 1988) -

which were closely interwoven with the god of land. In general, specific sacred sites in the old villages had visible buildings and those places were zoned for public usage which residents did not want altered.

Events associated with these religious sites are important, as observed by Lefebvre that 'groups...cannot constitute themselves; space's investment...is a matter of life and death' (1991, pp.416-417). In this case, the soil temple, which was used as the place to worship ancestors and the deceased by burning offerings to the deceased and to hold funerals, was regarded as a tradition-bearing unit. As remarked by a resident:

*(R, male, 57): 'it is the place for people to burn things after people died.'*

***I: Do all villagers come here to do that?***

*'of course, you cannot find a second place in the old village...it is sacred and conventional, inherited from one generation to another. Death is always a big matter in peoples' village life, thus you cannot decide by yourself where to burn offerings'.*

It can be seen that rural religion was embedded into daily village lives. For the older generations in particular, restoring the basic infrastructure for tradition-maintaining was the first priority. This priority was spontaneously agreed on by other members at the community level, and there was a strong sense of responsibility to keep the traditions going. For example:

*(C, male, 58): 'it is a root, you should always remember that people will die but traditions will not. Such as the soil temple, simple but significant, with this place people acknowledge a system of traditions, this is clear, at least next generation we do not need to teach them'.*

Residents highlighted that the reconstruction of traditional sites was seen as a foundation for the further development of traditional culture. On my visit to the new settlement, a resident took me to visit the soil temples in both the old villages and the new settlement. Today, there are two sacred sites for religious activities near the new settlement. One is in the north, and one is in the south. In the new settlement, the relocation of the soil temples has resulted in both positive and negative consequences. Soil temples have expressed themselves through the reestablishment of concrete sites



in the new settlement, without visible buildings though. Specifically, the physical restorations of the religious sites in the new settlement commenced and resumed their functions soon after community construction. The meaning of the religious sites was attributed to that they were not only regarded by residents as a physical environment, but also as a symbolic environment. As one participant said:

*(R, male, 44): 'it is the ancestral and generational reputation that a soil temple conveys to residents of a place...it can protect you, can bless your children and it is a place from where people can arrive at paradise. In short, it is so important that if you don't have such a place in the new settlement, you will feel unsafe, absolutely'.*

Since a cultural dimension has been integrated into rural religion, which is referred to as the specific religious activities 'in which learning plays an important role that leads to knowledge' (Roediger III *et al.*, 1987, p.156), wherein traditions were more active and purposefully conveyed rather than unconsciously inherited by residents. It can also be argued that rural religion had conventional characteristics, which means that rural religion was not simply regarded by villagers as symbolism, but was also reflected in their routine and specific religious activities (Redfield, 1955, p.19). In other words, this conventional characteristic was apparent in that rural religion linked with every village member. Simply put, religious activities were of high general importance to the entire village, morally and traditionally. As remarked by one resident:

*(R, male, 60): 'no one can avoid the specific activities, for example, when people die, who can avoid the procedure of funeral rites, either ordinary residents or cadres? If they did not, people would say that their offspring were not filial'.*

Religious sites in the newly-constructed community are meaningful and discernible for residents, and they provide lived traditional experiences. Personal involvements in these ritualised activities, whose meanings are primarily embedded into families as well as to the whole community, are valued by residents as well. However, in contrast to the fact that there was only one soil temple in one village in the past, for residents who come from four original villages but are living in the new settlement, the two different sacred sites are not unified and consequently the

remaining religious and cultural value of them has deteriorated. As marked by one resident:

*(R, male, 59): 'who still cares? It is a new settlement, and you have to find a place to hold the burial rituals anyway. Just several years that we have moved to here...the choice of site is basically on the rule of convenience. I don't know whether is it still sacred or not ... some residents choose to come here or sit near here to idle time which could not happen in the old villages, because one must respect that place, but look at the residents here, the soil temple becomes a place of gathering'.*

In addition, drawing on the discussions above, for residents, a sense of belonging that should be settled with the relocation and restoration of soil temples seems doubtful in the new settlement. In corroboration of this, a resident remarked:

*(R, female, 44): 'I totally do not know why they decide here to be the new soil temple...however, as a new settlement and people from four different places, a mass-agreed site is good, we all have similar rituals after all in the old villages, but we have our own soil temple in the past, that is different to have a new one'.*

In this regard, a debate about the revival of traditions, particularly in the restoration of sacred sites, emerges. Debate arises over the degree to which the restoration of the soil temple was understood by residents as a revival of traditions, or merely reproduction of the past. The two religious sites in the new settlement have blurred traditional sacred and unchangeable features, leading to residents' confusion regarding particular religious activity and conventional behaviours. As such, one of the direct effects of the lack of clarity regarding the restoration is that moral constraints have come under challenge. For example:

*(R, female, 54): 'without a unified site, it seems like the soil temple is not so sacred...because in the old villages we have our own god of land, and the soil temple is where we hold burial rituals for our ancestors. But in the new place, it is a kind of strangeness and sharing a sacred place with people from other villages to worship the same god is a little bit weird.'*

***I: Is it still effective in the new settlement?***

*'it is likely that the divinity has been interrupted. So you see funeral is so simple that some residents did not even come here, omit the rituals...is not conform to the traditional requests, at least is not respect to the deceased'.*

Activities surrounding rural religion by residents could be seen as the origination of cultural development of the new settlement. Function of tradition-maintaining can be inferred from these activities. In spite of fading, the restoration of the sacred places and residents' religious activities are important to make the new settlement meaningful. However, debates on the revival of religious activities elicit the further need to discuss the role that the rural religion has played in community building.

### 7.1.3 Tradition-adapting and local identifications

Rural religion has long been understood as the source of cultural unity (Yang, 1961, pp.81-83), which underlies a socially diverse civilisation in the context of community construction. In the new settlement, religious sites have begun to take effect at not only the personal, but also the community level. Positively, 'the essential function of religion was to provide a collective symbol' (Yang, 1961, p.81) and in the new settlement, residents' religious practices has been critical in forming the image of a new community. In other words, the specific religious performances enabled residents who have relocated to the new settlement to gather cultural identifications. One of the residents who attend the religious sites very often remarked:

*(R, male, 56): 'it is near the road, when rituals happened, all people know. Because once the place is settled by residents, all tends to follow, and gradually, it becomes conventional. Now all people in the new settlement know where to hold the burial rituals...to some extent you can all here is the new soil temple of the new settlement now because it is generally accepted'.*

Continuance of tradition is evident in the new settlement through living characteristics (Naquin, 1985, pp.290-291). In addition to the singularity of history and ritual traditions inherited from the old villages (Anagnost, 1994, p.233), more importantly, the restoration of religious sites was valuable in confirming the newly-constructed community with a sense of place attachment. This is because, on one

side, religious sites have begun to function in the new settlement, which was reflected by the religious practices of residents; on the other side, the practical understanding of 'community' was constantly enhanced by residents' religious activities that have taken place in the new religious sites. This is also confirmed by Weller (2004, p.313), in that 'Chinese popular worship provides one of the major building blocks of local society'. Especially in the early stages of the development of a 'community', the revival of these sites exerts a more powerful force than the individual venues in inheriting and maintaining traditions.

Along with the resurgence of ritualised religious activities and sacred sites, the pervasiveness of private religious activities has reflected the challenges traditions faced in the new physical environment. To some extent, following the rituals from the past did not conform to the urban lifestyles and made it impossible for residents to achieve an 'urban status'. Peasant identity, which could be reflected by peasant rituals, such as rural sacrifice rituals and burial rituals that are regarded as backward and feudal (Kipnis, 1995, p.125), was in contrast to the contemporary progressive presentation of urban community advocated by the government. As remarked by one resident:

*(C, male, 58): 'it was just popular in rural villages; it cannot be changed in a short period. Traditions rooted from each village, they would not disappear, because traditions have been internalised into people's mind and exists in people's daily life, and it is hard to disappear. Traditions, you cannot use other means to make them disappear, it is only the way of them has changed, but not the essences...like in the new community, as urban, some people still care about traditions, because we still have thoughts rooted in rural culture'.*

Even though more evidence is needed before a firm conclusion can be reached, the findings here do seem to lend support to the revival and sustaining of rural culture after relocating to a new and urban settlement. Rural religion consolidated its role in the lives of residents in the new settlement and residents seemed to adhere to rituals. In most cases, as a cultural element, rural religion not only simply exists but has been continuously reproduced on the basis of its inherent cultural essences and by practices of residents.

However, a secularised trend, which has been shown by private practices in the new settlement, reflected the transformations of traditions and residents' adaptation to the new communal lives. In other words, it is not just the religions themselves that have played a role in constructing the new 'community'; the secularised activities turned out to be the traditional aspects that have been culturally adapted by residents to the new communal lives. In addition to the activities surrounding rural religion above, represented by issues of tombs, new performances of rural religions are embedded both into public spheres at the community level and the private lives of residents, which will be discussed below.

#### 7.1.4 Tomb and the change of beliefs

There is considerable evidence that tombs have long contained great significance in rural cultural and religious life. In Chinese culture, Confucian notions of filial piety and Buddhist ideas about salvation by tomb represent that death does not end the relationship between the living and dead (Ebrey, 2014, p.85). In addition, it is believed that the living have obligations to the deceased, who devoted themselves in life to their progeny (Ebrey, 2014, p.213; Kutcher, 2006, p.31). People exhibit great concern over ensuring good placement of a tomb and keep the tomb in stable and good condition, so as to bless the living (Whyte, 1988, p.314).

In view of the points above, what will be analysed here is the relocation of tombs during community construction. Issues of the tombs' relocation were heavily involved in concerns about land management. To achieve land consolidation for community construction and urban development, tomb keepers during community construction embarked upon money-generating activities. As expressed by one resident:

*(R, male, 60): 'in the year of 2006, or 2007, here was occupied by constructing high-rise buildings, and tombs were requested to relocate to somewhere else...one tomb, if you relocate you can get 600 yuan. There was no public cemetery in the past, tombs are located everywhere. You can bury dead people anywhere you want, but since the land requisition, land is collected, for land use, tombs cannot be located anywhere; and they still want to build high buildings here...yes the only good thing is you can get 600 yuan's compensation if you move'.*

According to respondents on my visit to the new settlement, the local government did not destroy the tombs by force. Alternatively, a place was chosen to be used as a public cemetery to concentrate tombs. However, the building of a public cemetery resulted in economic stress because of the relocation as remarked by one resident:

*(R, male, 60): 'a tomb in the public cemetery is very expensive; the cheapest tomb is 40 thousand yuan, with limited choices. You cannot afford to die! The rich people spend 200 thousand yuan to buy a grand tomb; it is enough to buy a small house now!'*

In rural communities, economic power was exhibited through tombs and funerals (Liu, 2000, pp.152-153). In addition, the subsequent moral problems with relocating tombs were also identified by residents. To choose a tomb with good geomantic conditions was often regarded as the offspring's duty, which is a kind of filial piety. However, the public cemetery which was often seen as unaffordable by residents challenged this traditional idea. As reported by one resident:

*(R, male, 57): 'now the ritual becomes simple, coffin is not necessary anymore, and all the traditional system is almost abandoned. One can just pay 3-4000 yuan, and with some helpers, one can accomplish a funeral. But it is very complex in the past...as the proverb says, with a hundred days of accumulation of firewood, one can only burn them all by one day. Funeral is the one day, all is finished. It is fortunate to have a filial son that makes a good tomb for their dead parents. But if not, he will be accused morally that he is not filial. But according to the standard now, it is too expensive to afford to some extent'.*

More importantly, relocating tombs by digging up bones and building tombs elsewhere could bring accusations of harming the bodies or corpses of the ancestors, which was also a failure of filial duty. For example, a resident who has relocated tombs complained:

*(R, male, 32): 'removing the bones of my ancestors who have been buried for many years is not a good thing in any sense. Leaving the faith of god or soul aside, people always said burials with land bring peace to the deceased, but the relocation,*

*interrupting the peace and impacting geomancy. And more important, one cannot move tombs except if he has an irresistible reason in the past’.*

In spite of these disputes, the transitional traditions involving tombs provided an example that villagers tried to adapt to their new ‘urban life’. Traditions seemed to be reshaped by the practical religious activities to meet the demands of community construction and the new community lives. Internally, during community construction, as relocating tombs involved the whole village, a sense of unity for residents was formed when raising issues about tombs and arriving at solutions. Externally, relocating tombs become an exemplary campaign of moving forward, which corresponded with the spirit of governments’ policy, thus leaving an extensive space for local practices. As such, even local officials were very sensitive to criticism, removing habits and changing customs (*yifengyisu* 移风易俗) to be civilised became the watchword to relocate tombs and build up a modern community. As remarked by one cadre:

*(C, male, 47): ‘traditions never disappear. But at least for us, we advocate a more civilised way to commemorate the deceased. And sometimes, the funerals and tombs are just being taken at face value as merely an effort to show moral obligations or economically show off. And we are already a new and urban community now, we cannot maintain the old rituals anymore; it is time to change the custom, but I do not mean it can be accomplished within next few years’.*

Members of the Communist Party of China were supposed to be oriented forward. However, it is worth mentioning that as bearers of traditions as well, no clues were provided that cadres have played a significant role in removing tombs; maybe it was because they cannot get any benefit from doing so (Chau, 2001, p.81). In short, the issues of tombs in this context are usefully defined as adaptation of residents to the new urban lifestyles and the partial restoration of tradition.

Activities surrounding religions were valued by residents and they were as important to respect traditions as to be passed on to the future. In other words, in the new settlement, the revival of residents’ practices surrounding rural religions are serving as a combining force to link old grassroots and contemporary needs (Siu, 1989; Liu, 2000). Religious rituals and activities spatialised the new settlement and

quietly continue to hold their ground. However, the trend of secularisation, which has inevitably been taken as a tendency of ‘progress,’ in contemporary settlement once again raises disputes about rural culture. The analysis discussed at the beginning of this chapter serves as a starting point for a further discussion of cultural transformations between urban and rural spheres, as well as between the past and present.

## **7.2 Performances of clans: in search for the potential of ritualised life**

Cultural identification cherished by residents has been implied by revival of religions and the issues of tombs, which is used by this research as a point at which to reveal the clan as a very meaningful aspect of social life. As is examined in the literature review, historically, rural life in China was dominated by clan organisation (Weber, 1981, pp.44-45), in which clan members cared for each other in the context of extended families that were largely based on patrilineal kinship networks (Watson, 1982, pp.590-591). In discussing communal interactions and responses to the role of clan, it is apparent that residents are sensitive to how their involvement in clan activities produce ties to and problems for their relationships with other village members. For example:

*(R, male, 59): ‘yes, clan is still working. Such as the secretary, comes from the big clan in the old village’.*

However, to a greater extent, most residents realised that their experiences are of a sustained clan being known about more generally within their old villages, rather than the new settlement. Clan, which was the backbone to support the ritualised life from families to the whole community, demands further examination in the new environment. How is the situation now?

### **7.2.1 Loosening bonds and diminished obligations**

In general, a clan is constituted by a number of families in rural China, which would have the same person as their clan head, or share a common ancestor (see Chapter Two). For clan members, ‘the cohesion of sib (blood relatives) undoubtedly rested wholly upon the ancestor cult’ (Weber, 1951, p.78). Specifically, blood ties in Chinese culture are defined as the strongest ties (Peng, 2004, p.1049), which is also



the primary basis of clan membership that connotes bonds and obligations. In the old villages, the roots of clan as a relational structure were fundamentally based on the same surname, which still works now, as reported by one interviewee:

*(C, male, 50): 'to be honest, clan that originates from or is based on the same surname still exists but the ties are loose. As to the meaning of which, on some big events such as weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, the clan members are still helpful'.*

In the past, the clan head usually had calling power and the responsibility to organise clan activities and manage clan affairs. In the old villages, bonds of clans formed links among clan members and extended beyond independent families into a wider area where a collective sense and basis of reciprocity were established. However, clans almost lost their authority after relocating to the new community, as confirmed by one resident:

*(C, female, 48): 'of course, the prestigious elders of the clan must be invited to the important events as the representative of the big family, for example, the name on the invitation card is generally written like, xxx [the elders' name] invite you to my grandson's wedding and so on'.*

In the new context, the authority of the clan head was almost diluted to the symbolic and ritualistic levels, and the bonds of clan members became loose. A resident reported that:

*(R, male, 52): 'sometimes, clan, one must show respect to the elders, especially in conflicts with others, they would play a role of mediator and it works. But even the brothers they do not visit each other in conflicts, clan is mostly being symbolic. It is different with the clans in south China or the minority ethnics...even you have a clan head, who would listen to him? Now the youngsters they do not obey'.*

Clan retained its symbolic meaning of collective activity but lost its power of normative constraints with clan members. Even so, as is implied in the meaning of clan, the norms of clan interactions and values regarding collective actions would still enable residents to expect social support from clans. In addition, clan solidarity

connotes that 'the sib stood as one man in support of any member who felt discriminated against and the joint resistance of the sib' (Weber, 1951, p.95). For example, a collective clan activity that on the basis of intrinsic consanguinity was remarked by one resident as evidence that clan solidarity was maintained:

*(R, male, 47): 'we fixed our family tree [compiling of genealogy] 4 or 5 years ago, traced back the last 20 generations. All clan members in the tomb-sweeping day to show worship to ancestors together, eating together, about 300 people, a large clan. If there are some affairs, people all offer help, but nobody is in charge'.*

The clan culture remained in these cultural practices which help to reinforce the bond of consanguineous ties among clan members in the new settlement. Especially but not exclusively in the new settlement, independent families (see chapters five and six) are major actors and have influence on collective actions and solidarity within the clan. It is supported by evidence that much younger family members are not living under the shadow of the ancestors. Inevitably, the inter-generational ties as blood ties that functioned to sustain the clan are weakening gradually. As one interviewee remarked:

*(R, male, 49): 'every one cares about their own family affairs first. Like me, I know clan but my family cannot depend on clan, that is to say, even in the same clan, some become common friends after several generations. I know the ties are located in, for example, tombs, but the next generation may become more and more unconsciousness of clan'.*

Families as the basic units in the new settlement become more independent and clans were being re-shaped by the new physical environment, which was as much a manifestation of socio-economic as cultural change. Loose bonds among clan members and diminished authority of the clan are the current situation in the new settlement. Of still great importance are collective activities that are recognised by clan members. The new situation challenged Hsu's (1971) point that group interest takes precedence over individual interest in Chinese culture, which corresponds with the values of the clan.

Overall, clans after community construction sustained bonds but with diluted obligations of clan members. The transformation of clans corresponds to the new

lives of residents. The new settlement allows more differentiations between clan members, which have faded the role of clan, especially the obligations of clan members, which would potentially impact the ritualised life of residents. The following subsection focuses on ritualised life to assess the extent to which the new relational feature of the clan works and its social meaning in the new settlement.

### **7.3 Ritualised life in community construction**

It is worth considering the rituals and customs as components of community construction. Rituals involved in collective activities occur at the community level, such as wedding, which have been utilised by this research as a representation of cultural performances. In order to highlight the social aspects of weddings inherited from the old villages, this research looks beyond the transformation of the host families, the banquet and the event itself, to examine how rituals were socially embedded into residents' lives in the new settlement.

#### **7.3.1 Wedding procedures: place change and banquet**

The experiences of residents in the old villages remained over time, both through memories of events from the past and through ritualised procedures: holding the wedding ceremony was performed by the same set of social skills and procedures. It was the duty of the host to provide a place and food to show their hospitality in weddings. A family was taken as a social unit in weddings and the head of the family was generally the person who manages the wedding procedures, even when the wedding may involve the whole clan.

For some residents, sites of weddings act as bridges to the past. The change of wedding sites and the modified procedures after relocating to urban areas, in contrast to the past, show people where and what they do not want to change. For example:

*(R, male, 32): 'essences of traditions do not change. Wedding rituals were held in residents' own houses in the old villages, but now all moved to the big restaurant...it is an urban style'.*

It can be seen that weddings have been endowed with new and urban meanings. In addition, though maintained the essential meanings, the relocation of

wedding sites and the new urban lifestyles facilitated a trend of 'showing off' for weddings, which was claimed by interviewees that weddings have deviated from the traditional forms. For example:

*(C, female, 30): 'the old traditions, for example, peoples' relations are pure, it is a way to maintain relations, and it is deep rooted. But now, when you think deeply, it is the same. People communicating together by the chance of wedding, it is just about the change of place, but the effect is still working everywhere'.*

In line with the movement of weddings to the restaurant, there has been the transformation of the banquet, which plays a critical role in the wedding. Wedding banquets in the old villages were not only a treat to the guests with good food but also a means of symbolic construction with significant ritual procedures. Similarly, it is the social prestige of the host families to hold a banquet successfully in the new settlement as well. As reported by one resident:

*(R, male, 55): 'the chase for grand weddings now, you can find some in the old villages but not as many as now. People with more money, they go to the grand restaurants. They invite more people and of course it is a way to gain prestige. Residents always comment on the banquet provided by hosts after a wedding'.*

In the new settlement, elaborate weddings function as demonstrations of wealth and are criticised by many residents. However, when asked to comment on the communal views in respect to engagement in the grand activities of weddings held in restaurants, residents often expressed that this new situation of weddings are problematic but not necessarily bad. The reasons are partly attributed to the upgraded living conditions and urban status that residents must adapt old rituals to them. On one side, negatively, residents acknowledged that the threat associated with community construction was attributable to the physical environment and urban-ritualised customs preoccupied with new community life at both individual and communal levels. Indeed, the current physical environment was perceived to undermine households' vital role as social units (see Chapter Six). In the old villages, a wedding could be expanded from the host family who marry a daughter or son to the clan or even the whole community. This is to say, in the past, in addition to the

wedding ceremony, preparing wedding affairs could be supported by the whole clan. As a resident observed:

*(R, male, 52): 'wedding is still necessary, but it is not held in residents' own houses. People want to save trouble...the new physical environment is not available as well, not that big. If it is big enough, it is more convenience to do that in one's own house...more affordable and at least the food is better than the restaurants'.*

However, it is impossible for a wedding to be held in the new settlement and clan as the basis of ritualised collective activity has diminished. On the other side, positively, in view of the new situation of clans, residents who are less involved in clan are more likely to hold supportive attitudes towards change because weddings in the old villages not only meant a heavy economic burden, but also days of preparation. One resident remarked:

*(R, female, 54): 'we are living near the city centre and there are not enough places, people going to a restaurant to hold wedding is a natural choice. Holding a wedding in the restaurants is more effective...you can deal with it by your own family, not the whole clan together'.*

Overall, ritualised weddings emphasise more procedures than belief and they reflect more orthopraxy than orthodoxy in the new settlement, which means that the procedure matters most while the essential meanings or beliefs of the rituals are irrelevant (Watson, 1988, pp.4-6). However, a noteworthy phenomenon is that the transformation has blurred the different meanings of traditional rituals and specific etiquettes to residents, leading to confusion regarding particular ritual practices and community customs. Put another way, in the new settlement, the conventionalised rituals in the past are not being followed strictly and they become self-decided and self-sufficient instruments based on residents' demands. In addition, in the new settlement, ritualised life at the community level does not occur frequently as most families were concerned in the old villages. Overall, rituals that represented by weddings have developed with the changes taken by community construction, physically and ritually. To some extent, rituals have been adapted by residents. Now it is time to examine the social meanings of rituals performed by residents in the new settlement.

### 7.3.2 Ritualised social support - reciprocity

As argued before, residents' home and families as social units have been undermined. This situation was intensified by the place of hosting weddings that has been relocated from the houses of residents to restaurants, even though the guests would be well-treated. In addition, normative behaviours were required and defined the social relations within ritual events, which have shown that social networks are not a static structure, but dynamic and embedded in social interactions in rituals. In short, in the new settlement, three main aspects with respect to normative behaviours are identified as threats to social meanings of weddings. The first is the wedding has shown a professional trend as wedding services were contracted to wedding planning companies, which had damaging implications for the nurture of the clan ties of community members from the community perspective. For example:

*(R, male, 36): 'wedding ceremony is in charge of 'specialists', an outsider, not by the head or even a family member. Take a look at the wedding in the restaurant, even helpers are not necessary. Being a good host is simple, but the meanings are being lost'.*

Indeed, commenting specifically with respect to the matters surrounding wedding, residents asserted that the simplified and professional trend of reciprocity was likely to exacerbate the fact that social ties have become weakened. For example:

*(R, male, 52): 'of course, you cannot offer too much, and you cannot stay at the restaurant too long. You just need to give gifts [suili, give money or gifts, a kind of gift exchange] and eat and then leave'.*

To some extent, residents attributed the diminished interactions which characterised their relationship with other community members to the detrimental impacts of losing their engagement in wedding affairs, as mentioned above. This was intensified by the second threat to the reciprocity: reciprocal labour assistance. A relevant expression is:

*(R, male, 58): 'I think the most important aspect is labour. Women help to prepare food for the banquet, men help to arrange the needed desks and bowls,*

*plates, clean and decorate the new places. Friends and neighbours are mainly needed, because relatives are also regarded as guests'.*

The premise of reciprocity, residents acknowledged, was constructed on the basis of familiarity - the basic social ties. Residents observed that identities such as clan membership or neighbours often offered residents a profound sense of engaging in ritualised activities. This was confirmed by one resident:

*(R, female, 54): 'weddings in the old villages depend largely on mutual help, not only from kinship networks, but also your neighbours you know. My son's wedding, you come to help me, and on your son's wedding, I will pay back'.*

However, in the new situation of weddings, the role of residents has changed from direct engagement to onlookers. Labour assistance is not necessary, which indicates both a failure of reciprocity and the necessity of an alternative form of reciprocity. Illustrating reciprocity, residents acknowledged that diminished interactions in ritualised life are the third threat. An invitation to a wedding signifies the relationship between the host and the person who is invited (Bian, 2001, p.279). In the old rural villages, it was commonly a social norm to attend ritualised events such as weddings and people were expected to continue their social networks through these ritual events in their daily lives as they took on roles, such as labour assistance, as referred to above.

Additionally, gift exchanges play an important role in lubricating social networks. In China, a family is supposed to pay back previously received gifts later on (Yan, 1996). Gift-giving is largely reciprocal and it takes time and effort to build and maintain social networks. The gift-givers will be recorded elaborately because one day the host should find a chance to pay back and the scale indicates the size of his/her social network. Generally the contribution of labour assistance to the host family in the old villages was as important as gift exchange (*suili*) from a reciprocal perspective, which does not work in the new physical environment. As remarked by one resident:

*(R, male, 57): 'when you go to offer help is to show your mind, which are different forms of offering help. Especially in the old villages, one cannot suili too*

*much money, so the labour assistance is the main form. Now, I think it is the same, more money, and deeper relations'.*

It is confirmed by research that weddings are occasions for presenting gifts as a means of reciprocity (Yan, 1996). However, in the new settlement, reciprocity in weddings is featured more by utilitarian values. Application of money in social practices is a more defining element of ritualised events now in the new settlement (Chau, 2006). Some participants expressed that the wedding has been regarded as a way to relieve the burden due to that wedding is now held in urban styles, as remarked by one resident:

*(R, male, 59): 'marriage, in this age is simple, if you have many friends, like business, you go to the restaurant and order more tables, less friends, less tables, and when your friends get married, you also need to suili [give money], you should take a note of these accounts. A good restaurant, eight people one table needs several thousand yuan, sometimes one should depend on the fenziqian [the gathered money from attendants]'.*

Drawing on the above, reciprocity and gift exchanges between residents indicates that cultural events are occasions of productions of relations. However, in the new situation, it is more likely that ritualised gift exchange is not only an act but a process where reciprocity has been simplified as a way of gaining economic benefits. Rational calculation should not be the basis of reciprocity in social networks in most of residents' experiences, which has become a trend now.

### 7.3.3 Ritualised social support - social capital and social space

The tradition of gift-exchange in social life provided a context within which the comparison of the essentials of social belief could be made between the old villages and the new settlement. Though the overwhelming view that gift exchange presents a common and traditional situation, residents asserted that in some instances social meanings have changed. Firstly, the social support function is not only displayed by the attendance of guests, but also by the financial gifts given by guests attending ritual events. The host can always count on the help of community members when they host weddings, as the networks can provide informal insurance in the old villages (Udry, 1994). But kindnesses based on the reciprocal mode, labour



assistance in the past, for example, can never be fully repaid (Yan, 1996, p.145); while in the new rituals, pay back becomes easier because residents just need to pay money and without other assistance that cannot be calculated. For example:

*(R, male, 52): 'the amount is not fixed; for example, friends, confidants or non-confidants, up to 5 or 6 thousand, my nephew got married, I give 5 thousand yuan, I am the highest. But my nephew on the side of my mother-in-law, I give one thousand yuan'.*

Partly, residents use events and the amount of payment to define or redefine relational boundaries. Gifts weigh more than the past as 'money express all qualitative differences of things in terms of 'how much'' (Wolff, 1950, p.414), as was emphasised by one resident:

*(R, male, 59): 'suili is a way of people to express their emotions. Closeness and distance is still clear in people's mind, it is a way of expression. For example, if I give you money (suili), you don't return or you return less, then relations are destroyed, it doesn't mean the basis of relations changed, it is a change of way of expression'.*

Rituals in social life in the old villages derived less from economic concerns. It is believed that social and cultural concerns were at least equally important to economic gains. In the old villages, gifts were given according to ritualistic occasions rather than barefaced situations of rational calculation in urban settings. Gift exchanges now can immediately generate economic gains, easily and directly. Thus the social relations show an instrumental trend in ritualised life.

Secondly, rituals were regarded as a mean to cultivate social status. For example, some residents believed the attachments constructed by these events would be a way to confirm the standing of families in the village (Zito, 1997, pp.26-30; Hevia, 1995, p.212). Put another way, a wedding was an occasion for host families to show their boundary of social networks, economic power as well as family reputation. Rituals have been virtually re-embedded into the new communal lives in the new urban settings. An illustrative expression is:

(R, male, 58): *'how many people come to the wedding represents a family's renyuan (relations with people) in the community, it is clear to see'*.

More importantly, cultural events are also seen as ways to renew and maintain social interactions within the new spatial boundary. As remarked by one resident:

(R, male, 56): *'weddings and other events are cases of communicating, courtesy demands reciprocity, so it is'*.

Social relations that characterised by norms of mutual support are likely to conform to the connotation of bounded solidarity (Portes, 2000, pp.59-61), which is one feature of a 'community'. On-going transformation of rituals was exemplified by weddings and the social meanings behind them. Reciprocity and social capital, to some extent, showed the willingness of residents to adapt to the new social spaces without many choices, in spite of the perceived negative side-effects of weakening social ties. Additionally, from the experiences of residents, it was the basic social ties of residents that laid the foundations for the engagement and interactions in rituals, which in the past governed social behaviour (Yang, 1994, p.320). While in the new settlement, new situations of reciprocity and social support have served as social norms (Ashton *et al.*, 1992; Bernstein, 1984, p.370) and have functioned to maintain the order of ritualised life.

However, the social norms which dominate ritualised life in the new settlement also caused controversy. It has been shown that the representations of ritualised events were based on the image of residents as active participants in socially constructed communal lives. The new social norms played an important role in encouraging changes in social behaviour; however, there was no guaranteed positive effect on personal attitudes (Pretty, 2003, p.1914). That is to say, when newly-developed social norm of behaviours that is contradictory to their adaptations to the new settlement, reverting to old ways is often a compromised choice for residents. Overall, communal lives are neither necessarily nor sufficiently determined by the instrumental trend in ritualised life, which is not only urban-oriented but also traditional-related. From the respondents, engagement in ritualised activities is more likely to offer potential for constructive consequences arising from the residents'

commitment to the new lifestyles and the settlement. Much room of traditional aspects has been left by community construction for residents to improve their communal lives in the new community.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of community construction, traditions and rituals were expected to contribute to the construction of cultural basis and the maintaining of social ties. Specifically, the representation of religion as an active cultural factor in the new settlement is a reflection of the dynamic interplay between contemporary practical demands and traditional normative expectations. The socio-cultural understandings of religion, coupled with the specific activities that deviated from traditional beliefs, for example issues of relocating tombs, have all contributed to the new adaptations and revival of cultural roots. In terms of the restorations, the historical and cultural implications with respect to the functions of boundary-identifying and tradition-maintaining have been continued and reinvented.

The findings also suggest that the role of clan in the new context undermines the potential for residents to exploit the resources and social support of the newly-constructed community. The bonds and obligations, as well as the relative merits of collective actions which were elements of social support for clan members, are more in keeping with the view of the old village as a resource, rather than the new settlement. Also from these points, the essential features of effective practices that were extended to clans have driven the change of ritualised life in the new settlement.

The representations of rituals: weddings, which draw on historical and cultural heritage, as well as the lived circumstances of the new community, are characterised by transformed reciprocity and social relations. Rather than static, rituals are seen as dynamic and have played a vital role in reshaping social spaces, as well as the social relations in the community. Moreover, in the contemporary settlement, procedures matter more than the revived traditions they believe in. These local understandings of rituals and traditions, by emphasising their active roles as valuable resources, have acted as mediators of the stress between new social life and traditional roots in the new settlement.

The result of this study is a strong testimony that rural culture can play a role in building a new community. It can be concluded that the revived traditions drawing on available cultural materials from the old villages inevitably become important factors to reshape ongoing social relations and cultural meanings. After community construction there is not only revival of traditions in the new settlement, but also the transformations are regarded as an expression of the new life. The situation of community building by way of community construction will be wholly concluded in the conclusion chapter that follows next.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

*“A people-centred approach is indispensable to urbanisation/city and town-risation<sup>36</sup>. The main tasks of urbanisation are to achieve permanent urban citizenship for rural migrant workers and other agricultural labour forces that have moved to cities/towns... Construction of urban agglomeration, medium cities, small cities and towns, and new types of rural communities need to be planned scientifically ... Emphasis should be put on achieving the best results of urbanisation. Shandong province needs to make sure that about 62 percent<sup>37</sup> of its people become permanent urban residents by 2020. In pursuing urbanisation, approximately 7 million agricultural migrants need to settle down in cities and towns.”<sup>38</sup>*

The above excerpt comes from a document on urbanisation in Shandong province, which was published by the government in 2014. The document asserts the value of transferring rural labour forces to urban areas for China's ongoing process of urbanisation. This research was inspired by the reality of the rapid transformations taking place in China due to community construction, which has paved the way for the transition from rural to urban living over the last three decades and longer (Chen, 2013, p.166; Zhu, 2016).

The review of community development in China in chapters two and three shows that the policy of community construction has led to more integrated and coordinated approaches in dealing with transferring rural populations. Meanwhile, the approach of transferring rural populations to urban areas adopted by Chinese community construction has caused much discussion and debate, which has in turn

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<sup>36</sup> *Chengzhenhua* (城镇化), see Chapter Three, it is a term expressed with Chinese characteristics, which is usually used by government and scholars as a synonym for urbanisation. Instead of relying solely on cities to absorb the rural population in China, the government promoted an alternative way: through constructions of *chengzhen* (mainly small towns), and simply, this is called city and town-risation.

<sup>37</sup> According to the government statistics in 2016, the rate of urbanisation of Shandong province is 57 percent, which means that 57 percent of people in Shandong province were regarded as urban residents.

<sup>38</sup> See [http://www.shandong.gov.cn/art/2014/10/27/art\\_285\\_6670.html](http://www.shandong.gov.cn/art/2014/10/27/art_285_6670.html) 山东省新型城镇化规划 (2014-2020 年), The new type urbanisation/urban and town-risation plan of Shandong province (2014-2020).

reflected the elusiveness and complexity of the concept of community. As some researchers have observed (Benewick & Takahara, 2002; Shieh & Friedmann, 2008; Bray, 2013), including this research, the elusiveness and complexity of community is assured by the ability of community construction to represent significant transformations that are meaningful not only to public and policy discourses, but also to ordinary people's lives.

Drawing upon the above work, this research has explored the campaign of community construction through a case study, namely the newly-constructed community PY in Shandong province in Eastern China. After discussing methodological issues in Chapter Four, in chapters five, six and seven the investigation of the case study clearly shows the achievements and the dilemmas of current community construction practices.

This chapter provides a conclusion to the current research, which aimed to understand the process of community construction through the experiences of residents relocated from rural villages to an urban setting and what the current situation of the newly-constructed community looks like. In so doing, it returns to the beginning and briefly addresses the central questions posed at the outset of this study regarding the appeal, nature and development of community within community construction policy and practices. Next, this chapter highlights the key findings of community construction, mainly through three aspects: interpersonal relations during community construction, family relations and the transformation of social units, and communal lives and the reconnection of residents at the community level. This is then followed by revisiting the weaknesses of community construction. In the long run, recommendations for the future development of community construction are made to underpin the urban status of residents in the new settlement. A personal reflection on the research process, prospects for further research and contributions to knowledge are made in the end.

## **8.1 Community construction and urbanisation: a Chinese way of community development**

Building upon a variety of literature reviewed in chapters two and three, in the context of Chinese development, it seems desirable to view the theorisation of

community as the necessary first step toward, and precursor to, the more practical experiences of community construction programs. In particular, the research reviews forms of community specific to China's rural and urban areas in chapters two and three. Rural villages and the systems of communal forms of communes and work units that were enacted prior to the 1980s were the two tracks that can be depended on to explore the roots of Chinese community and community construction.

As argued in Chapter Two and in the background of Chapter three, there is a gap concerning mainland Chinese and Western scholars' usage of 'community'. In Chapter Two, by reviewing Chinese community and its development in history through rural villages, this research has shown that the Western term 'community' and Chinese term '*shequ*' (社区) are essentially similar lexical items. The Chinese '*shequ*' is originally covalent with the Western term community, as it is an expression of the Chinese people's view of local sociocultural entities. Therefore, this research agrees with that of many other researchers (Freedman, 1963; Fei, 1962; Xiao, 2011; Xia, 2011) that the Chinese people have harboured a belief in 'community' since the very beginning of the nation. The difference is that this belief has its unique own character and national identity, which has been maintained over the centuries and passed on by its people.

In order to understand the campaign of 'community construction' in China, a conceptual framework was developed in Chapter Three to guide the investigation. This framework was derived after a review of the application of urbanisation and community construction policies and practical experiences of community construction projects in different areas of China. In particular, in response to the decline of collectivism caused by economic reform (Derleth & Koldyk, 2004; Xu, 2008), community construction is conceptualised as a dynamic process led by the government that aims to create social cohesion and public responsibility by reconstructing communities differently in cities (mainly reflected by the community modes formed in different cities) and rural areas (by integrating villages, thus urbanising rural areas), which has been a particular point of investigation in this research. This conceptualisation provides an integrative framework which is useful to understand the key issues of community construction, the main actors and the goals in local policy responses, and how these have been implemented in China.

It has been possible to identify that rechanneling community to the needs of contemporary Chinese society is the critical purpose of community construction. Generally, the rapid development of community was promoted by the demands of social welfare and urban administration. Specifically, policies of community construction in pursuit of urbanisation, which draw heavily on the Chinese form of community/*shequ*, have been carried out in both urban and rural areas at different scales from the 1980s onwards. Thereafter the government's continuing commitment to community could be understood in reference to its potential to reinforce and advocate the constructions of urban-oriented communities. In part, community construction brought about a voyage of transformations for Chinese communities.

Overall, the manner in which community can be brought into full play in contemporary society is the key to establishing the Chinese way of community construction. In other words, community construction in China should be viewed either as a subset of urbanisation or as a unique mode of the urbanisation experience, which does not signal a need for renaissance of the former Chinese communities, but the opening of prospects for developing a specific Chinese way of urbanisation with deep-rooted historical origins based on national and local contexts. Community construction testifies to a willingness of the Chinese government to define new situations of community, which is in relation to the development of residents as well.

## **8.2 The meaning of community construction**

The government has constructed new communities as both communal settlements and urban socio-economic entities (Fei, 2002; Zhao & Wang, 2001). In the case study area, the former role assumes that the newly-constructed community has inherent capacities to cultivate communal lives on the basis of the communal roots of the old-village-lives that have passed over to it. As such, the newly-constructed community was considered important not only in terms of providing residents with a livelihood, but also in supporting and assisting their social life to pursue constructive lifestyles. Communal lives, community activities, for example, show the efforts of residents and the government, which have been supported by researchers insofar as new lives without land should be recognised in urbanisation and community construction (Xu, 2007; Xiang, 2008; Gan, 2009).



In terms of the latter role, there appears to be little doubt regarding the government's commitment to constructing new settlements as urban and modern communities. The prioritisation of the urban-led approach is obvious in the array of physical environments brought about by land requisition policy and land compensation; for example, the upgraded houses and improved infrastructure in new settlements. However, the findings show that serious reservations about community construction have been raised due to the relative priority given to constructing a so-called 'urban community'. The urban-orientated approach, in the short term, mainly focuses on improving the physical environment with only a light touch on the residents' adaptations to the new and urban settings.

Overall, in addition to direct economic interests, as argued by this research, community construction started by land expropriation has multiple facets that are believed to be capable of playing key roles in the contemporary society of the newly-constructed community. As outlined in chapters five, six and seven, shifts from rural villages to an urban settlement have witnessed dramatic reconfigurations of views regarding community and how it can be illuminated. To be specific, in responses to the overall research aim of investigating the process of community construction, several findings have been yielded by drawing on the empirical evidence collected from this thesis's original fieldwork:

#### 8.2.1 Interpersonal relations during community construction

In the process of community construction, rural social networks have experienced a period of substantial transformation. Interpersonal relations inherited from the old villages are preserved but not in their old patterns and the situation varies in formal and informal ways. Simply, there is a concurrence of continuity of local roots and transformations of social relations during community construction.

Just as with many other cases, land expropriation is the starting point of queries into community construction due to the dramatic transformations it has caused. According to the residents interviewed, in terms of informal relations, the transformation of informal alliances based on familiarity and acquaintances is clearly seen; for example, links amongst former neighbours and peers from the old villages seem fragile in the process of relocation and land expropriation. In addition, the

rearrangement and allocation of residential spaces in the new settlement has become a major obstacle to maintain the old modes of informal links, which has revealed signs of estrangement. The transformation of informal relations is also reflected in the case of the rise of utilitarian marriage, although this is not very common, it comes with great impacts.

With regard to formal relations, most residents still depend on traditional modes because the power of land expropriation and land compensation remains in the hands of cadres. By extension, as has been argued in chapters five, six and seven, residents had to depend on cadres and government to build their new community, for example in land requisition, community management and other community affairs led by cadres; however, there are contradictions between the interests of residents and cadres during community construction and these contradictions can be attributed to China's land system. As land requisition was negotiated between cadres (as representatives of residents) and the local government, residents' resentment of cadres and government often came from cadres' corrupt practices in land requisition and compensation. Local residents argued that they were unable to get the money they deserved from land compensation. Instead the cadres, and sometimes local governments, were viewed as the major beneficiaries. In addition, contradictions between residents and cadres could be directly seen from the aspects that link with cadres' political status and could be derived from cadres' political power, for example importing household registration to the new community (see Chapter 5).

Urban planning policies that conform to China's constitution were formed by the provincial government. However, as urban planning policies were practiced by the local government, this involved many issues (land, management, service) which could become the origins of contradictions. Local government promoted community construction for the sake of regional development (Zhao, 2017; Mao, et al. 2017), which was also proudly expressed by cadres in this case. Ordinary residents did not have direct links and communications with local government but only through their representatives in the community (cadres). However, as was mentioned in chapters three and six the appointment of village cadres must be agreed by upper tiers of government and they generally have a certain tenure, thus they may not have much willingness and power to resist upper government. Overall, contradictions between

residents and cadres were more specific while residents' criticisms of the government were more abstract.

#### 8.2.2 Family relations and the transformation of social units

The new lifestyles in the new settlement show the seeds of a more consumption-oriented way of life for families. After relocation, rural residents lost their agricultural land, meaning they can no longer make a living out of it, thus families have found it necessary to gain access to the labour market. Facing up to the situations of both the consumption trend and the necessity of labour market access, residents have tried to sustain their future by changing the roles of family members, which have been taken to by the adoption of clearer familial responsibilities within new lifestyles. Consequently, with more allocated houses, family members become more independent of each other and the constraints of family membership have declined.

It can be seen from the empirical findings that after moving to the new settlement, the first and second generation migrants are all experiencing a process of adapting to the new lifestyles. They try to keep the aspects that they do not want to give up, but they also gave up the aspects that they had to. In terms of intergenerational relationships, to some extent, elders represent the past villages – in their expectation, at least some aspects should be passed on to the younger generations. Elders worried about the continuity of social networks that were established on the basis of acquaintances in the old villages. They also expressed negative feelings concerning the change of physical spaces, though new spaces were largely used by residents to develop social activities. Elders also tried to retain and pass on traditions and rituals to next generations. For the younger generation, especially within their family lives, relatively clear roles could be regarded as their adaptations to the new lifestyles. They also developed new forms of community activities in the public spaces. With regard to traditional family values, they could still keep close relationships with their parents but in ritualised life, they chose their own way of performing although they retained the meaning of traditional values in cultural events.

In order to remodel social relations in the new spatial environment, particularly in private spaces, family has played a significant role. Family and its carrier - houses, which were regarded equally as home by residents, have been changed by the allocation of new residential spaces. In the new settlement, the formerly dispersed residential spaces in the old villages have been concentrated into high-rise buildings. On one hand, the new residential houses, with adequate spaces compensated by the government because of land expropriation, are large enough for family members to live apart (*fenjia* 分家 see Chapter Six). Enhanced by an independent trend mentioned above, families in the new settlement become fractured. On the other hand, the property of spaces of houses/homes changed from semi-public to more private, due to which functions of homes as social units have narrowed.

It has been found, in the new settlement examined, that the new situation of families and houses posed a great challenge to neighbourhood relations, as familial units were the main actors in communal ties in the past. Many respondents, especially the elders, were at pains to prevent the decline of former primary ties resulting from reallocation of residential spaces. More directly, social links are rooted in familiarity more so than on the basis of familial units; for example, former neighbourhood relations are declining to some extent due to the lack of continuity in intergenerational links, which were often characteristic of the lives of residents in the old villages. Overall, the former links of neighbourhood have weakened and more dependence on new social relations in the new physical circumstances has developed. As a consequence, a broader meaning of neighbours has formed and has moved into the public sphere.

Overall, the necessity of reconnection for residents in the new settlement is consistent with the fracturing of interpersonal relations during the process of community construction. Community support is found confined to particular channels: in informal, formal and familial ways, old social networks appear to be unable to sustain the communal lives of residents' futures, thus they cannot satisfy the real and ongoing needs of the new settlement. In this context, residents found that they needed to settle themselves into new social networks. Moreover, in the new settlement, the dependence on social links of old villages is declining, but has not disappeared; the primary ties are still considered to be fundamentally important, as

argued above, and have been proved by the situation of reconnected social networks in the new physical environment.

### 8.2.3 Local roots, communal life and reconnection of residents

Residents are still undergoing the process of reconnection and the new circumstances have gradually become a catalyst for developing new social networks. Two aspects are found to be important in the reconnection of residents, local roots and new spaces. Locality and continuity of local roots, mainly from the old links, provide the possibility for the reconnection of residents in new spaces. The newly-constructed physical environment did provide the spaces needed by residents to develop new interactions. The new spaces started working and functioning with consequent familiarity, and closer and denser relations having emerged.

#### *A. Local roots and their social contribution*

Local roots in the new settlement, in relation to interpersonal relations, are considered significant by residents who were most likely to view the old social links as both the basis of their reconnections and the development of new social relations in the new settlement. With nearby geographical locations known to communities prior to community construction, residents from the other four villages seemed to more easily develop new social relations due to the familiarity they had established on the basis of local roots. Enmity is apparent in particular to the outsiders whose activities and social relations are less widely known about within the community.

In addition, local roots were considered essential by residents in maintaining community membership. From residents' responses to outsiders, it appears that local roots have quite a powerful potential to contribute to the acceptance of a local identity when outsiders try to adapt to the new settlement; for example, owning a house at first. Locality and place identity still serve as fundamental roots for the rise of community attachment, especially in the example of gatekeeping against outsiders when they try to gain community identification in the new settlement.

Local roots are also apparent in maintaining rural religions. Transformations of religions are demonstrated by the effort put by the residents into renovating cultural practices surrounding religion. Rural villages which had been concentrated

into the new community were losing their traditional features in relation to rural religions and tomb issues. Religious sites were reconstructed, but not unified. Sacred sites with local roots have been proved important in maintaining traditions in the new settlement. Issues of relocating tombs show that traditions seem to be reshaped by practical religious activities to meet the demands of community construction. These transformations have not only shown the adaptation of residents to their new communal lives, but more importantly, adaptations to the new settlement have led to a process of forming communal identification.

### *B. Communal life and community activities*

Public space has provided an opportunity for reconnections of residents in the new community. Activities of reconnections move into public spaces then become known within the new community. Female and male respondents participate in communal activities in the new physical environment - in private spaces they not only have to maintain the old links but also show the willingness to develop new interactions with ongoing spatial changes; in public spaces, no matter in politically-characterised activities or their participation in other spontaneous activities, they were affected by the new communal circumstances.

Politically-characterised activities have had limited effects on communal life as expected by government with regard to cultivate communal sense and socialist values, mainly due to residents' criticisms of government and cadres, which were rooted in issues of land compensation and land expropriation. In terms of the potential influence, as observed by this research, the politically-characterised activities have created meeting opportunities for organising residents together. This has actually created chances for interaction.

A major development in the new settlement was found in the spontaneous activities resulting from adaptations to new lifestyles. Interactions have increased for residents, but this varies according to demographic factors such as age and gender. Elders are more likely to participate in community activities due to the old links and having more spare time in their new lifestyles. The role of female respondents is clearly seen in the development of social relations; for example, in the development of spontaneous entertainment activities and new modes of neighbourhoods. Women

were identified as responsible for forging bonds which would enable residents to meet new friends. Women's role is also discussed in the issues of traditions and cultural elements (see Chapter Six), which are represented by weddings in this research. Influenced by the new lifestyles in the new physical environment, cultural practices of wedding contradict traditional meanings and thus do not appeal to women, who have played critical roles in ritualised life both from perspectives of social support and social bonds.

The current situation of clan in the new settlement is featured by the loose bonds and diminished obligations of clan members, which are manifested in the process of community construction. Thus weddings, which were usually held as clan events, have been influenced by changes regarding clans. Subsequently, social support, social capital and social space were carved afresh by the new lifestyles in the new physical environment. Overall, all aspects of social support and social relations in ritualised life show a trend that contemporary, practical needs overwhelmed traditional normative expectations. However, the daily interactions of residents also see a struggle between traditional roots and interventions taken by community construction. The argument of this thesis is that the re-channelling of cultural factors by community construction is not a return to the past but a rejuvenation and reinvention of tradition in adaptation to current circumstances and new lifestyles.

With respect to the case of conventional economic activities (see Chapter Six, mainly reflected by issues with regard to a periodical market – *ji* 集), the local market was prohibited by the government in 2015 in favour of a new indoor supermarket. Generally, interviews with ordinary residents showed that the prohibition was harmful to their conventional interactions and thus caused feelings of loss. While for cadres, progress in safety and sanitary spaces in public streets in the newly-constructed community are apparent according to the new communal lives geared towards an urban-oriented community.

In light of these considerations, it is possible to draw the overall conclusion that changes brought about by community construction are not necessarily negative forces. Residents show adherence to old social ties on the basis of local roots during and after community construction, thus generating promotion of reconnections in the

new physical circumstances. The new physical circumstances were used as social spaces and by dealing with routine matters residents developed further interactions and new communal lives. Traditional values underlie the continuity of culture thus settling residents down in the new communal lives. At the very minimum, the newly-constructed community is vibrant and the reconfigurations of residents evoked a sense of communality and solidarity with others. All in all, the question of meaning in community construction lies close to the fact that the promising yet subtle influences community construction brings to bear on residents' understanding of community not only renovate the past, but also serve as expressions of a new life and way of being.

### **8.3 Community construction: what to construct?**

The indications of urban-orientated community construction provided an appealing approach to reassure the public that community construction is in place to deal with the challenges coming from the transformations from rural to urban life. However, in the new 'urban community', respondents were more likely to be cognisant of and influenced by censure elicited by their new status of 'urban residents', which was originally caused by the damaging impacts of detachment from land and failure to adapt to new lifestyles.

Interviewees recognised that (see Chapter Five), livelihood should be reconsidered with no land in the new settlement, but the struggle between the identity of rural peasant and urban resident became an obstacle in looking for employment. Regardless of their status as rural peasants or urban citizens, residents do not want to be migrant workers as they were in the countryside. Thus, even with income from renting houses and limited chances of employment gained through formal relations, considerations for future lives and the more consumption-oriented lifestyle made residents emphasise the importance of gaining stable income as a prerequisite to their adoption of an urban lifestyle.

Community construction was taken as an integral component of urbanisation to facilitate the achievement of the national urbanisation plan, and in doing so, secure equitable development for citizens in both urban and rural areas. In terms of communal life in the new urban setting, it is clearly seen that former modes of



interaction from the villages cannot be maintained. In Chapter Six, we can see that residents developed new links in the new settlement, which show their adaptation to the new lifestyles. Even if former links and primary ties are still important for residents, newly-developed communal relations have become the main theme of communal lives, and thus underpin the urban status of residents from the persistent process of developing communal lives.

In some ways, the promoted 'urban status' was also found to contradict traditional Chinese norms. Cultural aspects in the new settlement, arising together with both interpersonal relations and physical environments, are reminders of the old villages, which often cause disputes over traditional Chinese communal life versus new urban lifestyles. For example, (see Chapter Seven), in ritualised life, some parts of rural and traditional aspects, particularly in rural religions and tombs issues, were seen as inappropriate in the new settlement and thus abandoned by residents. The cases of utilitarian marriages and the change of social to economic capital represented by gift exchanges/*suili* show that demand for instant interchange of interests have priority over conventional behaviours and thus may not appeal to those who are interested in maintaining Chinese traditional contexts.

In spite of criticisms, the new settlement has been constructed in a modern and urban style. A school system has been established from kindergarten to high school; in terms of health services, community clinics have been used well by residents; in the new community, sanitation stations took responsibility for waste disposal that were equipped with modern facilities, and some residents were employed as fulltime workers; this new settlement has worked as a transportation connection in the east of the city: public buses and gas station were constructed (possibly, there may be a metro station in the future), which was an advantage that attracted renters/outsideers to come and rent houses.

In addition, as mentioned above and discussed in the previous chapters, the government and cadres have played a critical role in community construction. It cannot be denied that some of the community construction affairs, such as land management, infrastructure construction, mobilising residents to relocate to the new settlement and community management, could not be accomplished by ordinary residents but has to depend on the Communist Party of China in the Chinese context.

In addition, community services brought about by community construction, such as agencies of police station, sanitation centre and landscape greening administration which are often led by Communist Party of China in the new settlement, not only improved living quality for residents but also created employment opportunities (see Figure 8-1). It was mentioned in chapter five that local residents gained priority for employment by the new urban management companies; however, employment chances were limited and often linked with formal relations. As such, more support with regard to employment opportunities or skills training was expected by residents from the government.

Figure 8-1 Employees (local residents) of a community management company



In particular, the grassroots organisations, for example villages committees, have served as bridges linking residents and the government in community construction. In the new settlement, in addition to the agencies mentioned above, other community management organisations are found supportive for residents' adaptation to the new lifestyles (Figure 8-2 two community service organisations).

Figure 8-2 A sanitary management centre and a community health service centre



Building upon the outcomes of community construction suggested in the previous sections, residents recognised the inevitability of the transitional aspects on contemporary community life. All aspects of transformations pointed to the struggling urban status of residents. As such, the adaptations of residents should be a continuing focus in community construction. In addition, the opening excerpt clearly shows that community construction should be ‘people-centred’ (The new type urbanisation/urban and town-risation plan of Shandong province (2014-2020)). This is to say, community construction serves to emphasise the support of the newly-constructed community to residents, rather than residents’ obligations to the community. As to what is going to be achieved by community construction, from all of the considerations above, it is asserted by this research that community construction provides opportunities for sustainable development, both for residents and the newly-constructed community. For residents, at least they have settled down in the new settlement and made the new settlement their own. In the future, if there could be more support from government, residents’ sustainable development in social cohesion, economic capability and cultural inheritance is promising. For the newly-constructed settlement, the sustainable meaning lies in residents’ daily lives and activities that have made the settlement alive and on the way to forming a ‘community’.

#### **8.4 Limitations and prospects**

In China, community research is a field that has emerged from and is limited by previous social, historical and political constraints (see chapters one and two). It is suggested that, in undertaking research on community in China, researchers not only need to consider the general political context, but also be able to engage with the deep-rooted social consciousness of the Chinese people. For example, during the fieldwork for this research, interviews were actually carried out much as planned; however, some practical difficulties were encountered when undertaking interviews, which demanded that the researcher to approached them skilfully.

The researcher’s personal experience as a Chinese student studying in the UK has enabled an understanding of the exquisite differentiations of two academic environments - especially in the research of community. The process of communication between my own culture and a different one, as languages are deeply

embedded in culture, sometimes is a struggle. Bridging the cultural gap has been a challenge in presenting the research, whilst at the same time the limitations of language skills have also constrained the expression of findings.

In terms of research prospects, the diversity of residents' experiences, with regard to community construction, raises further concerns in more subtle aspects. For example, further research could focus on the issues of gender; this research has partly investigated its influences on social relations, such as the role of gender in transformed family relations and the reconnections of residents in the physical environment. Deeper research appears to be a particularly promising area of study.

Although community construction across China shares common trends, partly conditioned by the general political environment and policies, tremendous differences have existed, and do still exist, owing to the historical development of local cultures. That is to say, geographical determinants of locations have an impact on the patterns of local community construction, such as in Chapter Three, where different modes of community construction and patterns of community development were summarised in different cities. However, as it was argued in the section on case study settings, the mode of community construction by way of integrating villages is typical in China and this mode was both stipulated and promoted by a provincial urban planning document (see Chapter four), thus a general picture of community construction could be gained by this research, at least on the provincial level. Future research could be conducted in various geographical areas across other provinces to present a more comprehensive picture, and a comparative study is feasible.

## **8.5 Contributions to knowledge**

In China, much attention has been paid to conflict in forced demolition (Wu, 2012; Li & Ge, 2013), which is merely at the starting point of community construction, whereas the importance of reviewing lives after community construction is not highlighted. The voice of residents is conspicuously absent within the current evaluative process of community construction, and the recognition of the complexities and diversity of their experiences will provide valuable insights for the implementation of specific constructions of community and the delivery of urbanisation policies. As such, this thesis presents a fuller picture of Chinese

community construction by pulling a broad range of issues together to epitomise them in the case-study of PY community in Z city. In qualitatively examining community construction, this research has produced meaningful information for policy makers and urban planning professionals to inform the development of interventions in Chinese community construction contexts.

Firstly, the research finds that there are some issues that require more attention when examining the situation of community construction in China, as there are very different institutional and political contexts. Since large scale community construction will take place in China in the next few decades, it is critical to see whether it can be promoted in a sustainable and healthy fashion in the context of current models of community construction. Following the themes emphasised in this research, from interpersonal relations, physical environment and issues of culture and traditions, both cadres and residents can develop a cohesive framework of understanding so as to improve the newly-constructed community's responsiveness to the needs of development.

Secondly, drawing on the analysis, it has been made clear that community construction needs to tackle some problems to manage an urban settlement toward an urban community. Also, as has been discussed before, the recommendations for improvement of community construction are to face up to the difficulties in underpinning the urban status of residents, especially from the perspectives of employment opportunities and adaptation to new communal lives. The analytical framework adopted in this thesis can be helpful both at the stage of implementation of policy and the guidance of specific constructions of community.

One of the challenges encountered by Chinese community construction is due to the harsh discrimination that rural villages have experienced since the foundation of the new China in 1949. Today, many villages have all but disappeared (Liang, 2013; Zhang, 2012), which has further affected the public interpretation of what community is rooted in. By reviewing the questions of community and community construction through theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, the adoption of reviewing Western and Chinese theories of community in developing a conceptual framework to analyse community by way of community construction in China is

largely appropriate. In so doing, community study in China has the potential to emerge from the shadows of political and historical constraints.

In this research, a case study was most ideally situated to identify current community construction issues. The case study area is feasible as it is a typical newly-constructed community following community construction, and based on which, findings of community construction have been made possible by extensive fieldwork. First-hand information was collected to present the situation as it existed as closely as possible. In addition, the newly-constructed community has allowed flexibility in research methods. The research incorporates observation to provide verification of the transformations of residents' communal lives. As community construction should be people centred, interviews were used as the main method of data collection from two groups with different characteristics: cadres and ordinary residents. The originality of the data collected in China has assisted in understanding the campaign of community construction more directly and deeply.

In addition, with the distinctive historical, social, political and cultural context, community construction is unlikely to duplicate experiences of community development that are effective in Western regions, as discussed in Chapter Three. Community construction identified by this research is vitally important. It has been made clear that community construction presents the starting point, but not the end of a 'community' and this research has provided a new context for debate regarding whether community construction is leading to 'community'. Overall, community construction in China provides an excellent case study for gaining better insights and deeper understanding of Chinese communities.

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## Appendix one: English/Chinese version of Content form



### Committee on Research Ethics

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

##### Title of Research Project:

The examination of community construction in contemporary China – based on a settlement named ‘PY’, Shandong province.

##### Researcher(s):

Song Litao

Please  
initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [DATE] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

##### Student Researcher

Name Litao song

Work Address

Work Telephone 07448934994

Work Email Litao.song@liv.ac.uk



Committee on Research Ethics  
利物浦大学伦理委员会

参与者知情同意表

研究课题名称: 当代中国社区建设概况研究-以山东省 Z 市 PY 社区为例。

研究者: 宋立焘

请填写

5. 我确认我已经仔细阅读并理解以上参与信息表以及研究的内容。我已经获得时间考虑并询问相关问题, 且得到满意答复。

6. 我的参与是完全出于自愿, 并且有在没有任何理由和解释的情况下, 随时终止访问的权力。另外, 如果有我不愿意回答的任何问题, 我有拒绝的权力。

7. 我明确知晓在数据保护法案下, 我可以在任何时间要求查看我提供的信息, 我也有在我的要求下销毁这些信息的权力。

8. 我同意参加以上研究

参与者姓名

日期

签字

知情同意者

日期

签字

研究者

日期

签字

研究者:

姓名 宋立焘  
住址  
电话  
邮箱 Litao.song@liv.ac.uk



## **Appendix two: English/Chinese version of participation information form**



### **Committee on Research Ethics**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

#### **1. Title of Study**

The examination of community-construction in contemporary China - based on a settlement named 'PY', City Z, Shandong province.

#### **2. Version Number and Date**

Version 1.0, January 2015

#### **3. Invitation**

You are being invited to participate in a research on community-construction in China. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and family members. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

#### **4. What is the purpose of the study?**

This research is to explore the construction of new communities in contemporary China and in particular the change from rural to urban living. Your experiences and feelings will help me to understand the changes you have been through and the effects these changes may have on your life in the future.

#### **5. Why have I been chosen to take part?**

'PY' is a new 'settlement'. This newly-created 'community' conforms to my research purpose and can be used as an example to check the effects of community-building. As an original resident from the four villages which formed the new community, I am interested in the memories which you hold of your old village and your feelings about your new home.

#### **6. Do I have to take part?**

Participation for this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime without explanation and without incurring a disadvantage.

#### **7. What will happen if I take part?**

You will take part in a semi-structured interview which will last for about an hour. With your permission I will record the interview but all interviewees will remain anonymous and none of your personal information will be disclosed in the report. I will ask you to sign a consent form (all is translated in Chinese) in advance of interview. Once a mutually convenient date and place for the interviews has been established, I will read through the information sheet with you again and verbally explain the purpose of gaining your informed consent before giving you time to sign the consent form.

**8. Expenses and / or payments**

Unfortunately, there is no reimbursement for participants.

**9. Are there any risks in taking part?**

There are no risks. If you experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research please let me know immediately.

**10. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

There are no direct benefits to the participants. This research is not designed to influence policy-making directly, nevertheless, it can provide direct insight into how policy interventions are working in practice and in this way could generate positive outcomes for residents.

**11. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know. You can also contact my supervisors directly to deal with your problems (Dr.Karen Evans phone: 01517942974 or email:evansk@liv.ac.uk and Dr.Lynn Hancock phone: 01517942980 or email:l.hancock@liv.ac.uk).

**12. Will my participation be kept confidential?**

Participation will be anonymous. All data referring to your personal information (name, places, dates, times, locations or any other specific or identifiable information) will be omitted from published data and will be anonymous in the completed data transcripts. Only I and my supervisors (Dr Karen Evans and Dr Lynn Hancock) can get access to the data.

**13. What will happen to the results of the study?**

Data collected by interviews will be analysed and used for my PhD thesis. In the informed consent form, you are guaranteed your personal information will not be identifiable from the results.

**14. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?**

During interviews, you can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise the data will be destroyed and no further use is made of them. If results are anonymised, results may only be withdrawn prior to anonymisation.

**15. Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

Litao Song  
Phone: 07448934994  
Email: Litao.song@liv.ac.uk



利物浦大学伦理委员会  
参与者信息表

1. 研究课题

当代中国社区建设研究-基于新建社区‘PY’，山东省。

2. 版本和日期

2015 年 1 月第 1 版.

3. 邀请函

很高兴邀请您参加一项关于中国社区建设的研究。在您决定是否参加之前，取得对本研究的研究目的，研究意义以及研究对象的了解非常重要。请仔细阅读下面部分所提供的信息。假如您有任何存在疑问或者不懂的地方，或者您想要了解更多关于本研究的额信息，请直接询问我。您可与您的朋友亲戚或者家庭成员讨论后再做决定。再次强调，此次研究纯属自愿。

感谢您花费时间阅读。

4. 研究目的

本研究试图探索当代中国社区建设的效果及影响。通常来说，社区建设通常以合村并居的方式实现，正如您所居住的新社区一样。社区建设经历了一个从农村转变为城市的过程。您对于此过程的感受和经历对于揭示社区建设的效果具有积极的意义。

5. 为什么是你？

PY 是一个新建社区，而且被认为是实现农村城镇化的典型。而且，通过合并村庄，由农村到城市的转变中，新的社区发生了显著地变化。合村并居模式也是一个典型的社区建设的模式，您所在的社区符合本研究的研究主旨，适合作

为研究的地点。作为原合村并居之前的村民，依据您的年龄，我们相信您兼具对老村子深厚的情谊以及在新的社区中扮演的积极的角色，不仅如此，您的经验和情感会为本次社区建设研究提供极为有价值的信息。

6. 是必须参加吗？

本次研究完全是自愿的，你可以随时随地在没有任何解释的情况下放弃参加本研究。

7. 我要参加的内容。

您将会参加一个半结构化的访谈,一些开放性的问题会被问及。所有的参与者都将是匿名的，任何有关于个人的信息将都不会被识别和追踪到，作为最终结果的数据中也无法分辨参与者的任何信息。我将和你一起阅读知情同意书，并会口头解释此次研究的目的以及获得你们知情同意的保证。在你们充分了解的基础上，签名并上交知情同意书。

8. 花费和报酬。

没有任何报酬提供给参与者。

9. 参与本次研究有任何的风险吗？

本研究不存在任何风险。如果在研究中，您感到任何的不适，随时让我知道。

10. 参加后会有任何的好处吗？

本研究不会为参与者带来直接的好处。本研究并不会直接影响到政策制定，然而，仍然可以深入的了解政策干预的实际运行，希望可以对居民和社区产生积极的影响。

11. 如果在此过程中您有问题怎么办？

如果您不高兴，或者您感觉有问题，请直接询问宋立焄。或者直接联系我的导师 Dr.Karen Evans phone: 01517942974 or email:evansk@liv.ac.uk and Dr.Lynn Hancock phone: 01517942980 or email:l.hancock@liv.ac.uk。

12. 我的参与会保密吗？

所有的参与者都将是匿名和保密的。所有涉及到参与者，地方，日期，时间及地点以及任何其他可识别身份的信息都将被删除。所有公开的数据都将是匿名的。只有我和我的导师们（埃文斯博士和汉考克博士）能获得信息。

13. 研究结果将会怎样呈现？

所有的数据将被用于我的博士论文，在知情同意书里面，你们会得到身份不被辨识的保证。

14. 我能终止参与此次研究吗？

在研究过程中，你可以随时在没有任何解释的情况下退出本次研究。如果您想继续，那么结果将被继续使用。否则，所有信息将被销毁并不再使用。

15. 如果我有其他的问题，我将联系谁？

**宋立焘 电话：07448934994 邮箱：litao.song@liv.ac.uk.**

### Appendix three: Information of the participants

Resident Code	Gender	Age	Identity	Villages
1	Male	50	Cadre	Village 2
2	Male	59	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
3	Male	58	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
4	Male	60	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
5	Male	42	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
6	Male	57	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
7	Male	44	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
8	Female	47	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
9	Male	32	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
10	Female	48	Cadre	Village 4
11	Male	55	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
12	Female	58	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
13	Male	52	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
14	Female	54	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
15	Male	57	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
16	Male	58	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
17	Male	60	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
18	Male	59	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
19	Female	54	Ordinary Resident	Village 3
20	Male	58	Cadre	Village 4
21	Male	53	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
22	Female	30	Cadre	Village 4
23	Female	44	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
24	Male	49	Ordinary Resident	Village 2
25	Male	61	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
26	Male	56	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
27	Male	36	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
28	Female	54	Ordinary Resident	Village 4
29	Female	35	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
30	Male	36	Ordinary Resident	Village 1
31	Male	55	Cadre	Village 2
32	Male	53	Cadre	Village 2